

JAN NYSSSEN

# A Chronicle of the Tigray Tragedy (2020 – 2024)





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Cover page: between 2020 and 2023, the Belgian newspaper La Libre published three cartoons that summarize well the Tigray tragedy. Illustrators: [Blaise Dehon](#) (top left and bottom) and [Olivier Poppe](#) (top right). Republished with permission.

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## **Abstract**

The Tigray region in Ethiopia faced a catastrophic humanitarian situation, with the Aksum massacre and others causing widespread disarray. The situation was exacerbated by the ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray. The situation was documented in the Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation, which provided a comprehensive overview of the humanitarian situation in Tigray. The blockade has led to famine, crop failure, and the cover-up of war crimes.

Despite the Pretoria Agreement, the entire Western Tigray zone remains occupied in addition to other areas along the Amhara and Eritrean borders, with 840,815 internally displaced persons unable to return home, facing hardships. The situation has been worsened by the escalation of violence and the lack of international diplomacy and rescue efforts: the UN and EU failed to provide adequate support and aid to the affected communities.

This Chronicle of the Tigray tragedy is largely the result of informal exchanges with informants and concerned friends that informed decisions on what to prioritize in the 67 Digests published between November 2020 and June 2024. It should be seen as the collective perception by a loose group of friends of Tigray, documented with a sense of urgency by the author.

Although the Chronicle stops its regular updates in 2024, notwithstanding a formal declaration of the war's end, the tragedy in Tigray continues unabated. The Chronicle includes various events such as the famine, massacres, and weaponized rape, as well as the ongoing humanitarian situation in Tigray. It also gives an insight on how news of this barbaric war became known to the world, despite government blockades. The Chronicle serves as an informed and progressive insight into the developing humanitarian catastrophe in Tigray, which the world largely chose to ignore.

Added value of this Chronicle is its continuity over time and largely over space as it covers all parts of Tigray, and adjacent areas. It complements more time-specific or 'specialised' reports and articles and serves as a record of sources about the Tigray humanitarian disaster, as informed by a range of direct contacts with individuals on the ground.



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## Introduction

When the war in Tigray broke out, just like many colleagues who had longstanding connections with this mountain region in the Horn of Africa, I reacted with disbelief. Although we had been worried over the worsening rhetoric since 2018, such as the Ethiopian prime minister calling his fellow citizens in the north of the country “daytime hyenas”, and militia leaders in the neighbouring Amhara region openly discussing the full extermination of the Tigray people.

After two days of war, we realised that what had started was not going to be a relative low-key conflict like so many in Ethiopia over the last decades, but an outright war. It took us five more days to get together with a group of Tigray-related scientists and publish a first “Scientists’ appeal: [In absence of major international diplomacy and rescue, towards a repeat of the great famine of 1984-1985](#)” (republished before Digest 1 in the Chronicle).

While this call expressed fears for high war-related damage, we did not anticipate the horrific realities that unfolded: brutal massacres, a campaign of atrocious weaponised sexual abuses including (gang) rapes, sexual torture and enslavement against especially women and girls of Tigray, widespread looting and destruction including cultural heritage, months-long absence of any communication, years of a mediaeval siege, massive imprisonment of Tigrayans, and deliberate starvation.

Among the [3253 signatories](#) of the Scientists’ Appeal, some 2000 requested to be updated on relevant news about the war, updates that could somehow break through the full media and telecommunications blockade imposed by the Ethiopian government. After feedback from other initiators of the appeal, I took it as a personal assignment to send follow-up emails to the signatories, which grew into the Tigray Digests, meant to update interested people with the rare information available about the situation within Tigray. Some readers didn’t want to continue following the continuously sad Tigray news, others asked to be added to the mailing list. Week after week, month after month, the digest was sent out to some 2200 people, many of whom in turn shared it further.

Throughout the Digests, I aimed to adopt the viewpoint of an indigenous Tigrayan farmer family and of the members of the traditional social support group (*‘idir*), which I am part of in Hagere Selam. These rural communities in Tigray, often already struggling to survive, were then subjected to the brutality of war.

The successive Digests are here bundled as a chronicle, giving an insight not only on the Tigray tragedy, but also on how, at least partially, the blackout could be circumvented, and the reality of what was going on could be made public.

The content of the Chronicle is published exactly as the Digests were written at the time, based on the information available, and without any further editing. Our understanding of events and attitudes may have evolved over time as we gained new information.

For place and person names, I have not used diacritical marks in the transcription of the Ge’ez into the Latin alphabet. I tried to render the terms as close as possible to the Tigrinya originals, both in spelling and pronunciation. In the transcription, stressed consonants are doubled: “*Sillase*.” Single speech

marks (') are used after letters that are pronounced with an ejective or guttural sound. In a few exceptional instances I deviated from this line of reasoning, like Mekelle or Adigrat, where names had become standardized in international usage. Any transliteration found in text from media sources was also preserved.

For the title, I took the freedom to borrow the terminology “Tigray tragedy” from Manuel João Ramos, whose [graphic essay on the topic](#) has not received the diffusion it deserves.

For a timeline of the war itself, I refer to Martin Plaut & Sarah Vaughan’s book “[Understanding Ethiopia’s Tigray War](#)”. Living in Mekelle during the war, Daniel Berhane’s book “[War on Tigray: Genocidal Axis in the Horn of Africa](#)” gives additional insight. Finally, in his book “[The Abiy Project - God, Power and War in the New Ethiopia](#)”, Tom Gardner depicts the activity of a PM Nobel Peace Prize winner who in a couple of years has thrown Ethiopia in total apocalypse.

The Chronicle basically address the humanitarian situation in all its aspects, including war crimes, starvation and the resulting collective depression. Since the Chronicle reports information in near real time, it is subject to additional filters. The Ethiopian government’s extraordinary efforts to impose a complete blockade, including on media and communication, were a major hurdle. “If Abiy could switch off the sun and close down the fresh air, he would do so,” said one of my former friends during the time when the blockade was at its peak.

Finally, the Chronicle is largely the result of informal exchanges with informants and other concerned friends. This communication informed decisions on what to prioritise in these regular updates. The Chronicle should be seen as a collective perception by a loose group of friends of Tigray, with shared worries about what was happening in the region, documented by me with a sense of urgency. Consequently, the table of contents should be read as a progressive insight into the humanitarian catastrophe that developed in Tigray: a continuing catastrophe that the World has largely chosen to look away from.

The title includes the year 2024. This is just the year when I stopped regular updates on the Tigray tragedy. While there is formally an end to the war, sadly the tragedy continues...

This Chronicle couldn’t be realised without the enormous sharing of information from within Tigray, and also among colleagues, be it through email or telephone communications. I am happy that so many people trusted me to share sometimes sensitive information which needed to be anonymised before publication in the digests. I want to particularly thank sixteen colleagues, who took up the task of reviewing these digests, some of them on a few instances only, others for up to fifty. Many thanks to Sofie **Annys** (Ghent University, Belgium), Paolo **Billi** (University of Ferrara, Italy), Seppe **Deckers** (K.U. Leuven, Belgium), Catherine **Dom** (independent researcher, UK/Belgium), **Emnet Negash** (Ghent University, Belgium and Mekelle University, Tigray, Ethiopia), Sil **Lanckriet** (Ghent University and EthioTrees association, Belgium), Thera **Mjaaland** (independent social anthropologist/filmmaker, Norway), Wolbert **Smidt** (University of Jena, Germany, and Mekelle University, Tigray, Ethiopia), Tim **Vanden Bempt** (citizen scientist, Belgium), Sarah **Vaughan** (independent researcher, UK), and six other colleagues from Ethiopia, Canada, Belgium, France, and Norway who prefer not to be named for various reasons.

The added value of this Chronicle is its continuity over time, complementing more time-specific or specialised reports and articles. It serves as an incomplete but still quite comprehensive record of sources about the war. Its uniqueness further stems from the fact that the Chronicle is informed by a wide range of direct contacts with individuals on the ground, in various places of Ethiopia, and specifically all over Tigray, though incomplete again.

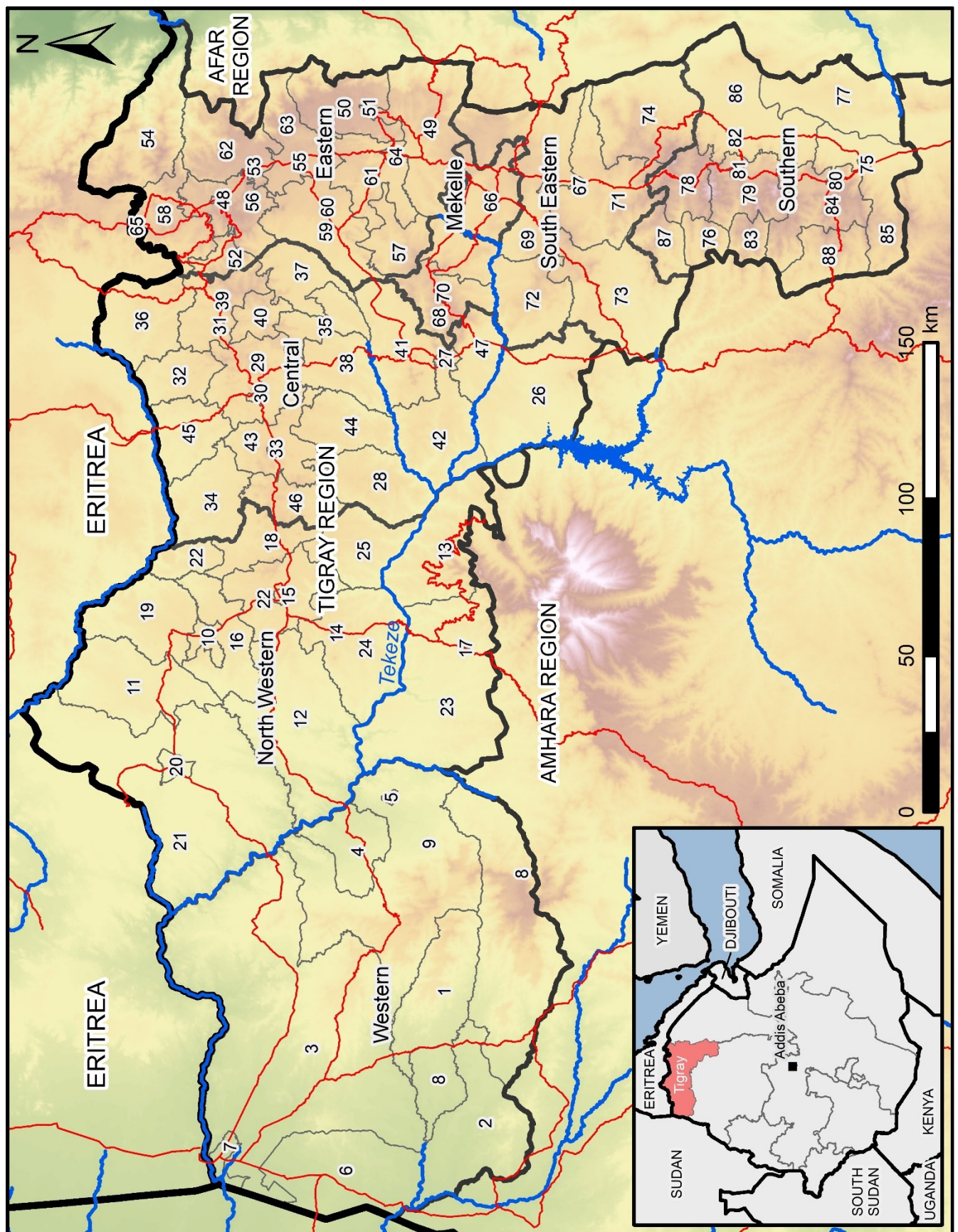
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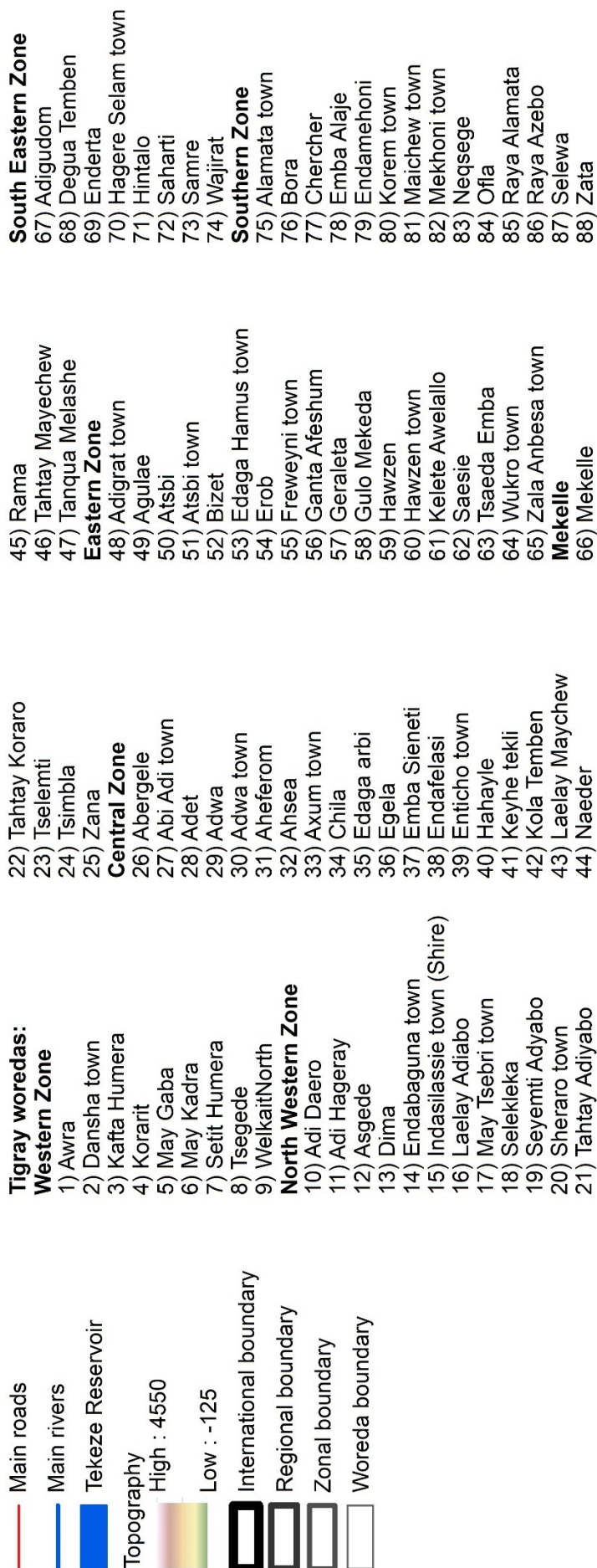
29 June 2024



# Map of Tigray

(See legend on next page)





*Administrative map of Tigray, with topography as background. Besides the regional capital Mekelle, towns and villages cited in the table of contents are Wukro (64), Adigrat (48), Adwa (29), Aksum (33), Shire (15), Humera (7), Hagere Selam (70), Debre Abay (west of 24), Togogwa (west of 66), Idaga Hamus (53), and Grizana (near 73). Further place names cited in the Chronicle may be localised using the legend. Map drawn by Sofie Annys, Department of Geography, Ghent University.*



## **Scientists' appeal: Tigray (Ethiopia) - In absence of major international diplomacy and rescue, towards a repeat of the great famine of 1984-1985 (11 November 2020)**

### **An appeal by concerned scientists and development professionals**

A humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Tigray, the northernmost region of Ethiopia. As professionals with decades of involvement in research and development activities in Tigray, we are saddened to see the gains made after the devastating civil war of the 1980s being wiped away before our eyes.

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, a military conflict erupted between the forces of the federal government of Ethiopia and the regional government of Tigray. Rising tensions between the two parties in recent years have intensified in the past months to erupt into open armed conflict.

Initially, we were hoping that talks could take place and avoid the use of weapons, however, we now understand the conflict is intensifying at an alarming speed. We have not been able to communicate with our colleagues and friends, and very little information is given on the development of the conflict and its consequences on the civilian population. However, the information available makes it clear that many citizens have lost their lives, many others are wounded, and people in Tigray and other parts of Ethiopia live in fear that their lives are at great jeopardy.

Food security in Tigray was already starting to become critical even before the current armed conflict. Large areas were on a path towards hunger and crisis for a number of reasons. Desert locusts, a recurrent problem, have become a real plague in many parts of Ethiopia, including Tigray over the past months and already destroyed vast areas of cropped land. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reports in its Desert Locust Bulletin of November 2020 numerous swarms in Northeastern Ethiopia. The battle against locust swarms was further compromised by sanitary measures against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The 2020 harvesting season should start soon, but little remains to harvest, while last year's stores have already been consumed. These months of the year correspond to the annual hunger gap for many Tigrayan farmers. We fear that the grain baskets will remain empty. Eighty percent of the people in Tigray are subsistence farmers, and even without war the large locust damage might lead to famine if no food aid reaches Tigray. Moreover, the military conflict is making further treatment of locust-infected areas even more difficult than it already was.

The transfer of budgets from the Federal Government to Tigray was stopped after the regional elections in September 2020, impeding the proper functioning of civil society. Additionally, the multi-donor-funded Productive Safety Net Programme on which 1 million people in Tigray depend for food aid, was interrupted and the announced transfer to local institutions had not started at the outbreak of the armed conflict.

Now, because of the conflict, a state of emergency has been declared in the region. Electricity, internet and telephone networks are currently cut off. All banks have been closed in Tigray, as well as the few

roads that were still connecting Tigray to the rest of the country. After Eritrea, also Djibouti and Sudan have closed their borders to Tigray. The people of Tigray, who already faced a very dire situation, now do so alone. Many have already died in this escalated conflict, but we fear that even many more will die because of hunger if no humanitarian assistance is allowed to enter Tigray.

Warfare will not bring a viable solution, for any of the involved parties. Particularly, Tigray is heading for famine, at levels that will rival the disaster of 1984-1985. We, therefore, call upon the world to demand negotiations and a ceasefire in northern Ethiopia, and to rapidly organise efficient delivery of food and other humanitarian aid to Tigray.

#### **Initiators of this international appeal (11 November 2020)**

Prof. Dr. **Jan Nyssen**, Full Professor, Department of Geography, Ghent University, **Belgium**

Dr. **Eloi Ficquet**, Assistant Professor, African Studies, Interdisciplinary Religious Studies, EHESS, Paris, **France**

Dr. **Wolbert Smidt**, Senior Researcher, University of Jena, **Germany**, and Adjunct Professor, Mekelle University, **Ethiopia**

Prof. Dr. ir. **Jozef (Seppe) Deckers**, emeritus Full Professor, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, K.U.Leuven, **Belgium**

Dr. habil. **István Tarrósy**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and International Studies, Africa Research Centre, University of Pecs, **Hungary**

Prof. Dr. **Paolo Billi**, emeritus Full Professor, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Ferrara, **Italy**

Prof. Dr. **Sil Lanckriet**, EthioTrees Association & Guest Professor, Ghent University, **Belgium**

Prof. Dr. **Kjetil Tronvoll**, Full Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies, Bjørknes University College, Oslo, **Norway** and Adjunct Professor, College of Law and Governance, Mekelle University, **Ethiopia**

Prof. Dr. **Pino Schirripa**, Associate professor, Department of History, Anthropology, Religions, Arts and Performing Arts, Sapienza University of Rome, **Italy**

Dr. **Sarah Vaughan**, independent researcher, **U.K.**

Prof. Dr. **Lindsay Whitfield**, Professor in Global Studies, Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, **Denmark**

Prof. Dr. **Trygve Berg**, emeritus Ass. Professor, Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric), Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), **Norway**

Prof. Dr. **Frans Bongers**, Professor Tropical Forest Ecology, Environmental Sciences Group, Wageningen University & Research, **The Netherlands**

See the original here:

[https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6gaqCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06\\_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform](https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6gaqCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform)

## **Digest 1. Organizing solidarity with Tigray in the middle of a total black-out (21 November 2020)**

Thank you for signing our [appeal for major international diplomacy](#) and rescue, to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Tigray, Ethiopia.

On Thursday evening, 19 November, there are **1977** colleagues from all over the world have signed the appeal. The [list of signatories](#) will be updated biweekly; it is available under the text of the appeal.

Many of us are taking initiatives of different kinds, and at different scales, such as:

- Peace candles at home
- Contacts with embassies and ministries
- Approaching MPs to raise the issue of the looming humanitarian crisis in their respective assemblies
- Opinion pieces in the media
- Distributing the appeal through Twitter and Facebook
- Open letters at the level of countries
- Network at country or continental scale
- Contacts with humanitarian organisations
- And: continue inviting colleagues to sign the [appeal](#)

This may give you hints for activities that you could undertake also. The list of signatories may help you establishing your own local network for this.

Please remember that this appeal does not take sides in the military conflict that is ongoing. We share the concern of the UN and the African Union for a humanitarian crisis that is assuming worrying proportions. Like all major humanitarian organisations we are upset by the painful situation of the common people in Tigray, and bordering areas in Eritrea and Amhara region. Given our love for Ethiopia and its people we are so concerned for the current situation that is breaking our hearts.

Upon request of The Conversation (“Academic rigour, journalistic flair”), some of us have written an article: [Ethiopia’s Tigray region has seen famine before: why it could happen again](#). The text of our appeal served as a base for this article, and about 30 references allow further readings about this looming humanitarian disaster. Right now, the article has been read 3150 times.

## Digest 2. Mekelle under attack; cries for help (29 November 2020)

Thank you again for signing our [appeal for major international diplomacy](#) and rescue, to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Tigray, Ethiopia.

The “hot” news is of course the closing in of battle fronts towards Mekelle and bombings of the city. The bombing has started on Saturday Nov. 28 in the morning despite diplomatic mediation efforts. The United Nations and governments should step up efforts to mobilize and work towards achieving a ceasefire, protecting civilians and expediting independent press coverage.

Numerous people have died or have been displaced, all over Tigray. We only received very occasional messages (formal letters and email messages) from inside Tigray, crying for the world to help them.

Just like all people who have family and friends in Tigray and Mekelle, we share their plight, emotionally. This text appears now as a signature under my emails...

አጅኪ መቐለ ! [ajóki Maqallé] in Tigrinya language – “Mekelle, be strong!”, or, more precisely “Be strong as I am suffering on your side; this too shall pass soon”!

*This city of 0.5 million inhabitants is now being bombarded by its own Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Nobel Peace Prize 2019. The [Portrait of Mekele, a threatened Ethiopian city](#) (Ethiopia Observer, 27/11/2020) is written by our colleague Eloi Ficquet, originally published [in French in the newspaper Libération](#).*

Similarly, we continue writing opinion pieces, petitions, alerting the media in many countries and invite colleagues to sign the [appeal](#). We also got feedback from many signatories undertaking initiatives. Thank you!

On Tuesday evening, 24 November, **2247** colleagues from all over the world have signed the appeal. The [list of signatories](#) will be updated weekly; it is available under the text of the appeal.

Please remember that this appeal does not take sides in the military conflict that is ongoing. We share the concern of the UN and numerous governments for a humanitarian crisis that is assuming worrying proportions. Like all major humanitarian organisations we are upset by the painful situation of the common people in Tigray, and bordering areas in Eritrea and Amhara region. Given our love for Ethiopia and its people we are so concerned for the current situation that is breaking our hearts.

If you wish to follow the news regarding this civil war, the [Europe External Programme with Africa](#) (located in Brussels) prepares daily Situation Reports with independently verified information, that can be [consulted online](#). There is particular attention to the situation of refugees. You may [subscribe](#) and get the update in your mailbox daily.

Let us hope that I can send an email next week with better news.

### Digest 3. Complete blackout continues (4 December 2020)

You receive this email as a follow-up on the [appeal for major international diplomacy](#) and rescue, to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Tigray, Ethiopia. On Friday evening, 4 December, **2390** colleagues from all over the world have signed the appeal. The [list of signatories](#) has been updated. Feel free to forward this email to others!

After a month of Tigray being totally cut off from the world, the UN has negotiated aid delivery to the region, yet, the international aid corridor is not yet functional! [EU top official Janez Lenarcic](#): “the aid pact for Tigray is not good enough” - “Humanitarian aid should also go to areas not under government control in line with the fundamental principles of humanitarian aid. There may be malnourished children on the other side also.”

With regard to the humanitarian situation, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also highlighted the [plight of the refugees fleeing to Sudan](#), and the [dire situation in Tigray itself](#). Let us remind also that, except for some border areas to Amhara region, not any communication is possible with Tigray since more than a month. Even after controlling Mekelle, the authorities do not allow communicating with our friends, relatives and colleagues there!

The politico-military situation is not really the object of our appeal. Yet, we receive messages asking “what is going on? Do you have background information?”. I would, therefore, like to refer to some recent articles by leading political analysts:

- Tsedale Lemma: [How did Ethiopia slide from optimism to war?](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Abiy Ahmed’s war against Tigrayan rebels endangers a fragile union whose collapse would destabilise the Horn of Africa](#)
- Awol Allo: [How Abiy Ahmed’s Ethiopia-first nationalism led to civil war](#). Ironically, colleague Awol who had nominated Abiy Ahmed for the Nobel Peace Prize, is now [“wanted” by the Ethiopian authorities](#)!
- Mesfin Hagos: [Eritrea’s Role in Ethiopia’s Conflict and the Fate of Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia](#)
- Nizar Manek: [Sudan Will Decide the Outcome of the Ethiopian Civil War](#)

Don’t expect *unisono* analysis – but it is all strongly evidence-based!

You might also be interested to follow the online debate organised by Bergen Global (Norway): [Ethiopia’s Armed conflict in Tigray: causes, consequences and possible ways out. It is on 10 December, at 2 PM](#) CET, with participation of Asnake Kefale (Addis Ababa University), René Lefort (independent writer/author on Ethiopia) and Lovise Aalen (Chr. Michelsen Institute).

Finally: our appeal appears also an excellent tool for networking; several national (Italy, Germany, UK, ...) or professional initiatives (Archaeologists, Political scientists, ...) have partly built upon our network. Information is being shared, as well as experiences how to make initiatives for peace and humanitarian aid to Tigray better known to the general public.

## **Digest 4. ETV broadcast from Shire: “Slaughtered like chicken” (12 December 2020)**

The concept of our appeal developed among European partners with long-time ties with northern Ethiopia. It spread through Europe; the past few weeks many African colleagues have also signed this appeal: notably, 8 from Ghana, 15 from Kenya, 5 from Rwanda, 12 Nigerians, 22 South Africans, and 218 Ethiopians (belonging to 14 universities). In total [2501 colleagues have signed the appeal](#).

Together with many others, we are working hard to bring the tragedy to the attention of the broader public and political representatives worldwide. In combination with emerging evidence from within Tigray, this led to [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet taking a strong stand](#): “There is an urgent need for independent monitoring of the human rights situation in the Tigray region, for all necessary measures to protect civilians, and for accountability for violations.”

Please continue inviting people in your networks to [sign the appeal](#).

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- 4 – 2. Mekelle University
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- 4 – 4. Background information
- 4 – 5. Please share the appeal

### **1. Plight of the people in Tigray**

There are dramatic situations regarding refugees. About 45,000 people who fled into Sudan are [in danger of forced repatriation to government controlled areas in Ethiopia](#). Eritrean refugees in Tigray are reportedly being [forcibly repatriated to Eritrea](#) and when a [UN team tried to verify the situation in a refugee camp, they were shot at](#). Others, who managed to reach Addis Ababa are [forcibly brought back to the war zone in Tigray](#). The number of internally displaced people in Tigray must be huge; figures up to 1 million people are mentioned. Tigrayan towns occupied by the army are largely deserted. We have seen a report by a large apolitical social organisation in Tigray, mentioning that “the people are displacing within the region from one district to another district and then still from that district to another and just living within the church compounds, streets, schools, health centers; the households not displaced are without access to basic necessities”.

In a [rare ETV broadcast of a meeting of Ethiopian authorities, the elders](#) in the town of Shire mentioned large looting and killings, with the majority of population gone out of the town. Tigrayans in Europe fear that this broadcast by the official Ethiopian TV channel describes what is ongoing in numerous places in the region.

Massacres have occurred, with particular mentions for Chercher in South Tigray and also May Kadra and other places in Western Tigray, with both parties incriminating the other one. Independent investigations should be allowed, that not only comprise interviews, but also forensic methods such



as DNA identification of victims and their relatives. Yet, Ethiopian authorities have [rejected independent probes](#) and announced that [they themselves will carry out the investigation](#).

Despite denials by the Ethiopian government, the Eritrean involvement of which we heard anecdotic evidence, is increasingly being recognised:

- The Guardian, 9 December: [Diplomats back claims Eritrean troops have joined Ethiopia conflict](#)
- Reuters, 11 December: [U.S. says reports of Eritrean troops in Ethiopia's Tigray are 'credible'](#)

## 2. Mekelle University

Mekelle University's students, originating from other regions than Tigray, were bussed to Asmara in Eritrea around 28 November, in order to travel further to their home places. Families have however [not yet heard back from the students](#).

In a separate development, according to the [daily update of the Europe External Programme with Africa \(8 December\)](#), Mekelle University officials are subject to a smearing campaign on Amhara Mass Media and on Facebook. They are blamed for alerting the outside world when Mekelle University was bombed on 19 November. We have no precise news about the whereabouts of our colleagues. There is an absolute communication black-out since 3 weeks – to our understanding they have not been arrested, but must be going through a difficult time.

[Reportedly](#), the University of Aksum, has been subject to wide looting, with computers and other equipment shipped to Asmara (Eritrea). Besides [running out of medical supplies](#), Mekelle's Ayder University referral hospital has also been [targeted by looting soldiers](#). On 9 December, the ICRC representative [reported the situation of the hospital](#): “No supplies, no fuel, no running water. Doctors & nurses have suspended intensive care services and are struggling to do routine care like delivering babies or providing dialysis treatment.”

## 3. Humanitarian aid

On 28 November, the [Ethiopian PM announced that the “Tigray operation is over”](#). On 8 December, however, Ethiopian students in Belgium have been informed by their embassy that [“the situation is far from over as the most wanted leaders of the TPLF remain fugitives.”](#) This tends to confirm fears that Tigray and the wider Horn are [bound for long-lasting conflicts](#).

The Tigray regional broadcasters have stopped broadcasting, but the Oromo chain OBN now also broadcasts in Tigrinya, [with occasional reports from Mekelle](#). The Tigray forces left the city on 28 November. There is some imagery of Ethiopian soldiers posing in front of known monuments, and other photos of streets that have been barricaded by youth in order to prevent looting.

The [Ethiopian authorities started sending food aid to Tigray, but corridors are not opened for foreign aid](#). The National Disaster Risk Management Commission mentions that 1200 tons of wheat were delivered to Mekelle on 10 December. [The photo accompanying the related press article shows a column of lorries near May Nebri](#), 56 km south of Mekelle. Yet, volumes of aid required are of another order of magnitude: the [UN and humanitarian partners are urgently seeking US\\$96.9 million](#) until January 2021 to help 1.1 million people in Tigray, and the bordering areas of Afar and Amhara regions.

4. As **background information**, see these recent publications, among others

- Tom Gardner, World Politics Review: [How Abiy's Effort to Redefine Ethiopia Led to War in Tigray](#)
- Mehari Taddele Maru, Opinion on Aljazeera.com: [Ethiopia's war is threatening domestic and regional stability](#)
- Eugène Bakama Bope, The Conversation: [Did Ethiopia's attack on Tigray violate international laws?](#)
- John Young, New Frame: [The looming long civil war that could break Ethiopia](#)

5. Please share the [appeal](#)

According to some comments on social media, our appeal has contributed to the strong diplomatic stand in bilateral talks and by international organisations in favour of ceasefire and humanitarian aid. This should be an encouragement for all of us to [continue sharing the appeal](#) to our networks! We call for ceasefire and humanitarian aid, and this does not mean that one takes sides in the civil war.

## **Digest 5. News of massacres trickles out (15 December 2020)**

Sorry, I have no good news, and first of all thank you for your moral support. Please continue inviting your friends and colleagues to sign [the appeal by concerned scientists](#) and development professionals. We call for cease-fire and to rapidly organise efficient humanitarian aid to Tigray (Ethiopia).

In line with the contents of our appeal, the latest [FEWS \(Famine Early Warning System\) report](#) warns that Tigray faces a food emergency if access constraints persist.

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- 5 – 3. Burning of standing crops
- 5 – 4. Ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray
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### **1. Before 26 years**

When I went the first time to Tigray (Ethiopia) in 1994, the people in [Hagere Selam](#) gave us the best house in town: the only house with the old black-red-white tiles on the floor, mud walls plastered with cement, and a heavy iron door with three holes in it, through which the kids tried to peak in and see “how Ferenji (Europeans) are living”. These holes were the result of indiscriminate shooting by [Derg](#) soldiers, on behalf of the central Ethiopian military government, when they left Hagere Selam in 1989, retreating from the pressure of [Tigray guerilla forces](#). Back in 1994 the story was told vividly to me, with all victims remembered by their names.

### **2. Battlefields and revenge on civilians**

History seems to repeat itself. Despite official claims that the Tigray war is over, battling is ongoing on numerous fronts, right now. The official objective of this huge war, i.e. capturing a few Tigray leaders has not been met. One of the battlefields is around the town that adopted me, Hagere Selam. Not only we have done numerous joint research and development activities there, but I am also a member of the *idir*, our traditional neighbourhood social security association. Whenever a neighbour faces problems, we all contribute some money to help them. When somebody dies, we jointly welcome, host and shelter mourners who may have travelled from far. The monthly contribution is 10 birr, or 25 eurocents, but the main thing is to be together, and support each other. Unfortunately, right now, war and covid prevent me from being in Hagere Selam. Because I should be there! I am helpless, just noting that twenty to twenty-five Hagere Selam people have been shot by Ethiopian soldiers in recent days. It happened that, after the TDF (Tigray Defence Forces) retreated from Mekelle, the Hagere Selam and Tembien area have become a major battlefield. In one of the nearby battles, the ENDF (Ethiopian army) were defeated by TDF. As a matter of revenge the Ethiopian army entered Hagere Selam and terrorised

the town; 20-25 local people were killed. I know the names of some, but relatives asked me not to reveal them, as they, in turn, are fearing revenge from the Ethiopian army.

In the village of Addi Qoylo, near the frontline, several priests and elders have been shot. The father of one of our field staff is badly injured. The old man uses to call me “my son” though I am only 15 years younger than him. ((Just now, I get a [second evidence of this massacre from a twitter message](#) – I know the pictured priest by face, and rock type as well as building style of the wall are typically Addi Qoylo’s... There is no more doubt about this massacre!!!)) Right now somebody is going to Addi Qoylo on foot (the only means of communication) and he carries my recovery message to “my father”...

After five weeks of black out, telephone services have resumed to Mekelle. That is for Mekelle only, not the rest of Tigray region. And only telephone, not internet, not water, some hours of electricity and not banking services. In the few cases that it is working, when calling our friends and colleagues in Mekelle, we get a narration of the plight they went through: “we went to rural area XYZ to avoid the bombings on Mekelle; the area where we were was then bombed also, we returned to Mekelle, some of our relatives are still in the rural area”. Several people responded only briefly because “I am at a funeral ceremony right now”...

When we ask our friends in Mekelle about war conditions, overall silence follows, with some general message “thank you for being with us, in happiness and in sorrow”.

And, nowadays, it is the period of sorrow!

### **3. Burning of standing crops**

We hear about ongoing battles, not only Hagere Selam, but also between Wukro and Adigrat, Samre, Ala’isa, Kolla Tembien, May Tsemre, around Maychew. In Wukro, after executions of civilians between 25 and 29 November (similar to [what happened in Bisober](#)), the entire population has fled the town.

Here is an example of the consequences for the rural population around Sheraro. Like elsewhere in Tigray, it is harvesting time over there. See this time-lapsed satellite imagery of the Sheraro battlefield: <https://twitter.com/ryanmofarrell/status/1338283949815193602> Just in one scene of approx. 3 km by 3 km, the standing crops of 70-80 farm plots have burnt between 7 and 12 December. There are also a dozen homesteads in the burnt areas. There are like a hundred “Sheraros” occurring all over Tigray!

### **4. Ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray**

For our research related to Tekeze river, I had the chance to visit Humera in Western Tigray. At that time, back in 2017, a peaceful town with a particularly attractive historical centre with cobble stone streets.

Nowadays, we read unequivocal reports of Tigrayans being forced out of Western Tigray, properties looted and burnt down by Amhara militias, and signs of Amhara region taking over the administration of Tigray's Western Zone. Details can be retrieved from the daily [EEPA Horn situation reports](#). If you wish to receive the daily situation reports by email, [click here](#).

## 5. From the Ethiopian side

There is a parastatal Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (<https://twitter.com/EthioHRC>) but they remain silent... Also on Sunday, [Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed welcomed Sudanese PM Abdalla Hamdok](#) for a two day visit to Ethiopia. However, noticing that there was no willingness from the Ethiopian side to enter into a negotiated cease-fire, [the Sudanese PM left after two hours](#)...

Later on Sunday, [Lt. Col. Abiy's message to Ethiopian generals](#) was this one (full transcript; I highlighted crucial passages): "You have to repeat your heroism in one way. When America fought with Iraq, after they won the war, it took America 8 months to capture Saddam. A victory in war becomes half a victory when there is delay in capturing fugitives (...). In this regard, **I do feel the people of Tigray hold the highest responsibility**. The fugitives are not hiding as a unit. The fugitives who went into hiding one by one after leaving their cars must be handed over to the (new) Tigray regional administration and federal armed forces. This is expected from all residents. **If that doesn't happen, the armed forces will not be able to help in rebuilding the country**; in repairing roads. Time will be wasted looking for the fugitives, in which case many civilians will suffer. (...) I urge our people to comply, and I expect you (his audience of military) to apprehend fugitives as quickly as possible. I am aware **you have already many under your custody**. I am also aware that the hiding spots of many have been identified. We should aim to finish this operation as quickly as possible and move on to the main task of rebuilding the Federal Armed Forces. We can then assess collectively each incident that occurred." In other words: "as long as the people of Tigray do not hand over their elected leaders, we will collectively punish you"...

So far, no evidence was brought that any Tigray leaders are under custody of the ENDF army... But helicopters continue [dropping soldiers in Tembien, terrorising farmers in order to make them tell the whereabouts](#) of the Tigray leadership.

## 6. Please read:

Alex de Waal, 14 December 2020: [Five Reasons Why the UN Security Council Needs to Deal with the Humanitarian Crisis in Ethiopia](#): "There's little doubt that starvation crimes are being committed in Tigray"

And, just out today: the [African Women Appeal for a Horn of Africa Peace Initiative](#), signed by women from all over Africa (including by Julia Cassell, the former Minister of Gender of Liberia and Tsedale Lemma, editor of Addis Standard), in favour of a cease-fire and an African women-led peace force.

## Digest 6. Fire in settlements (19 December 2020)

Unfortunately, the latest developments do confirm that it is still very useful to continue circulating our appeal for ceasefire and humanitarian aid to northern Ethiopia. Over the last week, some additional 300 colleagues have signed (**2726** in total), many of them from countries like Germany, Zambia, or Belgium. Please continue your networking both with individuals and institutions, in the interest of the suffering population.

At the end of this message, you will also see possibilities to **donate for humanitarian aid**.

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- 6 – 2. Mekelle University
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- 6 – 4. Regional and subcontinental dimensions
- 6 – 5. Donations for humanitarian aid

### 1. Pressure on the Ethiopian government

Thanks to the interventions of several MPs, in the European parliament, and in national parliaments, the EU has now taken steps that go beyond “expressions of deep concern”. Indeed, [the EU delays budget support to Ethiopia because of the Tigray conflict](#). The European Commission spokeswoman told the BBC there were five conditions for the aid to be resumed:

- Granting full humanitarian access for aid workers to reach people in need in all affected areas
- Allowing civilians to seek refuge in neighbouring countries
- Ethnically targeted measures and hate speech must stop
- Mechanisms to monitor, and investigate allegations of, human rights violations
- Communication lines and media access to Tigray should be fully re-established.

### 2. Mekelle University

After the conflict started, Mekelle University has continued functioning. On Thursday 17 December, the university graduated 3290 undergraduate and postgraduate students. The ceremony lasted for half an hour, which is extremely short, for Ethiopian standards. We could not recognise any of the professors or lecturers on the photos of the ceremony (<https://twitter.com/addisstandard/status/1339870553478488064>), but face masks don't really help... Mulu Nega, CEO of the Tigray Transitional Government gave a brief speech. Reportedly, one of the aims was to give an image that the situation had returned to normal in Mekelle.



### 3. The plight of war

On the other hand, the [Ethiopian military promised a reward of 10 million Ethiopian birr](#) (250,000 USD or 205,000 euros) to any person who knows the exact location of the Tigray leaders who went to the mountains for staging a guerilla war.

This is an indirect confirmation that war is ongoing, as people whom we reach through telephone in Mekelle continue telling us. The same stories are repeated over and again: looting, no food, (groups of) people shot dead, girls and women being raped, no medication, no water in the towns, ....

As an independent means of verification, Sentinel satellite imagery is increasingly used. The FIRIS (Fire in Settlements) twitter account [https://twitter.com/FIRIS\\_FireAlert](https://twitter.com/FIRIS_FireAlert) reports some detected large fires, related to ongoing battles. Just for the last days, there is evidence for battles in Tigray in and around

- Shimelba Refugee Camp (17 December)
- Hagere Selam (night of 15 to 16 December)
- Sheraro 7, 11, 12 December
- Adwa: Almeda textile factory on 6 December

Obviously, the list is non exhaustive; tracing back such events on a territory large as the Benelux, with daily imagery is a painstaking exercise...

### 4. Regional and subcontinental dimensions

For additional recent information, see:

- Reuters Graphics, 18 December: [The conflict in Ethiopia](#)
- Der Spiegel, 15 December: [A Country on the Brink - Ethiopia Sinks Deeper into Ethnic Conflict](#)
- European Council on Foreign Relations, 15 December: [How Europe can stop Ethiopia's slide into a regional war](#)

This article mentions risks of outbreak of a new armed conflict between Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions of Ethiopia. It so happens that two years ago, our research team published an article on [Persistence and changes in the peripheral Beles basin](#), from the geographical perspective. This covers the area where the conflict is developing.

Last but not least, tensions between Ethiopian and Sudanese governments [have led to several armed incidents](#).

## 5. Donations for humanitarian aid

On 18 December, the well-experienced NGO Caritas International has launched an emergency appeal, along with other NGOs present in Tigray (CRS, CAFOD and Caritas Adigrat and Mekelle). There is also a call to donate:

- in English ([CAFOD](#) or [CRS](#))
- en [français](#)
- in het [Nederlands](#)

With this humanitarian operation, Caritas aims to reach a total of 187,000 people, most of them children. Aid will also be provided to Eritrean refugees living in camps in Tigray, and to Tigrayans who have fled to the neighbouring provinces. Special attention will also be paid to the promotion of peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

## **Digest 7. Belgian TV reports from Western Tigray == More news smuggled out about massacres in Aksum, Idaga Hamus, Wukro, etc. etc. (24 December 2020)**

First of all, our best Christmas wishes (though in Ethiopia, Christmas will be celebrated on 7 January). The 1984 [Band Aid's tune is in the air](#), and – despite its rather patronising approach – it is again very relevant! This Christmas song came into existence on the occasion of the big famine in northern Ethiopia in 1984-1985...

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### **1. Humanitarian situation**

The humanitarian situation that is most striking relates to the war and its direct victims, as again stressed in [The Guardian](#) at the beginning of the week. A Belgian VRT television crew visited western Tigray, its deserted villages, and they could make it up to Shire where dire conditions in town and hospital were filmed. The key report has been [published with English subtitles](#); the full reports are [in Dutch on the VRT website](#). Seemingly, the visit to Shire was not planned beforehand, but at the main Tekeze bridge [the commander was absent and soldiers let the VRT crew pass...](#)

((If you don't read Dutch, you may need to install an [add-on on your browser for automatic translation](#)))

Informally, I could hear that this report was making a "lot of noise" in ministries in Addis Ababa. Political analyst Rashid Abdi states that the VRT broadcast is a PR disaster for the Ethiopian government, which has had the town of Shire "under control" for a month... We get fragmentary information, with lots of killings, looting, destruction from so many other places: Hagere Selam (contact me for own first-hand information), Maychew, Korem, Wukro, Abiy Addi, [Adigrat](#), Adwa, Aksum, Idaga Hamus... Also in [Mekelle](#), civilians are targeted by shooting soldiers. As a result of massive human rights violations, the leading German magazine Der Spiegel reports a clear trend in the Tigray public opinion: "[I will go to the mountains and join the fighters](#)".

I received questions why the Belgian journalist made the interviews in Amharic rather than in the peoples' mother tongue Tigrinya, as some interviewees were not fluent, and they had to tell their story in the language of the central authorities... As far as I understand, translators were from Addis Ababa and logistic constraints made it difficult to recruit a local translator. In any case, reaching up to Shire,

filming and reporting as they did is a masterpiece of work. Journalist Stijn Vercruysse is just back to Belgium, and we'll hear soon from him, I think. This is his twitter account: <https://twitter.com/vercrus>

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Michelle Bachelet, on 22 December](#) again mentioned the plight of civilians in Tigray: "artillery strikes on populated areas (in Humera and Adigrat), the deliberate targeting of civilians, extrajudicial killings and widespread looting." These examples "are likely only the tip of the iceberg". She has once again called on the Ethiopian government to allow full access so that allegations of war crimes can be investigated.

## 2. Harvesting time

Many of us have been involved in agriculture-related research in Tigray, and the current war is really a drawback for all the developments that had taken place in the last decades. Just now, a book chapter was published by Mekelle University president Prof. Fetien Abay about [Participatory research for food innovation by women in Tigray](#) – written before the war started, obviously...

Now, it is harvesting time in Tigray and the harvest will determine the food situation, in normal conditions one could say "for the coming year", in 2020-2021 we are talking about the coming months or weeks only...

I telephoned to a few people around Mekelle and in brief this is how the harvest looks like: farmers who live away from the road are working on their land, they are confident that the army will not come. That means that these days they can harvest and thresh what remains from their crop. Around Hagere Selam for instance the locust swarms were destroyed, just in the days before the war started, but there is still damage. Locally, crops have also been burnt, at places where military battles took place.

The situation for the harvest looks worst (1) in South Tigray because of very strong damage by locusts; (2) in Western Tigray, there are Amhara and Eritrean soldiers all over the place, nobody is harvesting their crop; (3) in places along the main roads. Overall, people have harvested early, before the locusts could eat their crop – the [ears](#) were not totally filled though. The harvested crop has then been put rapidly in heaps, for later threshing. Along the roads such harvest heaps have often been burnt by military, according to scattered reports we got. These weeks, especially in the areas out of reach for the military, farmers are threshing their crops.

FAO already warns that extensive breeding has given rise to a [new generation of locusts in the Horn of Africa](#)....

On 21 December, the International Rescue Committee warned again that [rising food insecurity and continued conflict](#) further deteriorate Ethiopia's humanitarian situation

### 3. Social media campaigns against humanitarian action...

Several of us have received lengthy emails, that follow standard templates, expending most of the words on explaining the background to and reasons for the military intervention in Tigray. However, that was not what our appeal was about. Our appeal is about ceasefire and humanitarian access. Daily news about this disaster makes such letters less relevant and our appeal more relevant.

There are also unworthy social media campaigns, not linked with the real content of our appeal, often backed up by government officials. Colleague [Kjetil Tronvoll wrote about these unfounded accusations](#) in the Awash Post.

And, being outside Ethiopia, the smear campaign remains a relatively luxury problem. When Tigrayan colleagues in Addis Ababa or in Amhara region were fired from their job, intimidated and imprisoned, cynically enough some of their neighbours and colleagues readily engaged to harm them more through comments on social media, presenting unfounded accusations about possessing explosives and millions. This is direct information that I got from two different victims, independently, after their release from prison.

### 4. Some recent articles

- Nic Cheeseman: [The Conflict in Ethiopia Calls Into Question Authoritarian Aid](#)
- Rob Curran: [We cannot allow Ethiopia to become this generation's Rwanda](#)
- Laetitia Bader: [Uncovering Crimes Committed in Ethiopia's Tigray Region](#)

### 5. Christmas action plan

- Listen again [Band Aid's Do they know It's Christmas?](#) – seems we are back in 1984!
- In your upcoming virtual get-togethers, invite your family and friends to sign the [appeal by concerned scientists](#) and development professionals. We call for cease-fire and to rapidly organise efficient humanitarian aid to Tigray (Ethiopia).
- There is the Caritas call to donate:
  - in English ([CAFOD](#) or [CRS](#))
  - en [français](#)
  - in het [Nederlands](#)

## Digest 8. Massacres and rape in the wider surroundings of Adigrat (2 January 2021)

Please distribute this information letter. It is still possible to join the **2832** signatories (on 31.12.2020) of this Appeal. It can be [accessed here](#).

Starting from the initiation of our appeal we have been **worried** about:

- the impact on civilians
- the risk for food supply
- the risk of long term warfare

Two months later, all our worries have been confirmed, and in **addition**, a series of dramatic events occurred that we had not anticipated:

- general bank closure for two months now, that increases the problems for food access, especially for urban people
- generalised looting with important implication of the Eritrean army that will exacerbate the food problems and humanitarian response
- generalised looting of economic infrastructure
- destruction and looting of historical sites
- actions against Eritrean refugee camps including abduction of refugees and killing of humanitarian staff
- generalisation of warfare (large-scale involvement of Eritrean army in Tigray, border clashes with Sudan army, deployment of federal and Amhara forces in Benishangul-Gumuz, repercussions in Somalia)

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## 1. Adigrat and Eastern Tigray

Our most recent circulars focussed on the situation in Western Tigray (re: [VRT TV report](#)) and on Mekelle. These places are still in a dire situation, but in this circular we would like to focus on Tigray's second largest town, that is Adigrat.

Soon after the Tigray conflict started, Adigrat faced attacks coming from Eritrea, jointly carried out by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops. Very little information comes through, till now. The [whereabouts of the Catholic Archbishop of Ethiopia](#), residing in Adigrat had been unknown for weeks, but travellers say that he is safe. We rely indeed on credible, direct eye witnesses who travel to Mekelle from where they can call, discretely. Several colleagues have also been able to verify and confirm other facts.

This twitter thread summarises quite well the huge destructions in Adigrat by the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies: [https://twitter.com/Hirane\\_Tigray/status/1341100799963873281](https://twitter.com/Hirane_Tigray/status/1341100799963873281) There is a *de facto* occupation of the town by Eritrean soldiers who do use buildings at Adigrat University campus as military barracks!

Adigrat is a large town on a narrow ledge between mountain ranges; the town strongly depends on food supplies from farther away. Like in Mekelle, civilians are also shot on an individual basis and rapes take place.

Here are some of the incidents observed by eyewitnesses in and around Adigrat:

- On 18 November, Eritrean soldiers killed 59 civilians inside their houses in the border town of Zalambessa.
- On 24 November, Eritrean soldiers drove a pick-up truck with machine guns through the central street of Adigrat and shot indiscriminately at shops, private residences, and passers-by. Several civilians were reportedly killed and wounded, including women and children.
- On 25 November, a group of 8 – 15 citizens (according to different witnesses) stood guard at the Addis Pharmaceutical Factory in Adigrat when they were handcuffed and executed by Eritrean soldiers.
- On 25 November, Eritrean soldiers shot 8 civilians inside their houses in the town of Hawzen.
- On 30 November, Eritrean troops killed more than 80 people in the Church compound of Maryam Dengelat, situated 5 kilometres to SW of Idaga Hamus.
- Staff of Dashen Brewery in Gondar informed us that their Branch Manager in Adigrat, *ayte* Isayas Asgedom, was also murdered that day at Maryam Dengelat, together with his family.



- Around 2 – 12 December, 24 men in the village of Abraha Atsbaha were ordered by Eritrean troops to dig graves for fallen soldiers. When the men had finished, they were executed by Eritrean soldiers.
- Around 1 – 14 December, 13 boys aged 12 – 15 years old from the village of Tokot near Idaga Hamus were ordered by Eritrean troops to load looted materials onto a truck. When they had finished, the 13 boys were shot dead by the Eritrean soldiers.
- Around 12 – 14 December, Eritrean troops looted the Negash mosque, the most ancient centre of Islam outside Arabia, which has also been shelled. 81 (mostly Orthodox Christian) villagers were killed while trying to protect the holy site from looting.
- Wukro has been heavily damaged mainly by organised looting, including St Mary College and the Catholic mission; the Sheba Leather Factory has been destroyed and local youth protecting the place killed in big numbers.
- Around 17 – 20 December, 750 inhabitants of the town of Aksum were killed by Eritrean troops when they tried to prevent them from looting the Maryam Tsion Church in the town.

Eyewitnesses also confirmed that Eritrean troops looted Adigrat hospital, Wukro hospital, Adigrat University, Adigrat polytechnical, and many factories. In several instances, photographs have been published, whose location is easy to ascertain. More photos will for sure emerge, when internet becomes available.

Abraham Belay originates from Adigrat and is Innovation and Technology Minister, loyal to PM Abiy. His mother has forbidden him not only to come to the family house, but even to visit her neighbourhood, because he made public announcements that Adigrat Pharmaceutical Factory and Adigrat University had been looted and destroyed by TDF (Tigray Defence Forces) rather than by Eritrean forces.

Adigrat University is in such a dire situation that [the students have been formally noticed on 30 December](#) that they are transferred to Mekelle University.

In the nearby town Inticho, there are also Eritrean soldiers present. There has been a lot of looting but now it seems that "Eritrean soldiers have received the order not to mistreat civilians". We do not know to what extent our informant was told what he wanted to hear since most his relatives are in that place. There is not much food left in towns closer to the border, such as Inticho indeed. In those places, bulky goods and livestock have also been taken to nearby Eritrea.

## **2. Mekelle and Mekelle University**

Mekelle serves as window dressing for the Ethiopian government, trying to convince its own public opinion that the situation is under control. Telephone communications are possible but not internet.

Banks have started working, but mainly to deposit money, few people can withdraw money. Different reasons are given for this: fuel stations only want to operate if they can deposit their cash regularly in the bank, for fear of looting and/or Ethiopian soldiers who have stolen cash in their pocket want to deposit that on their bank account.

The information we have is that Mekelle University (MU) tries to get organised with a focus on Ayder hospital. Most colleagues could confirm that their direct partners are OK, as well as current and past university presidents. Two lecturers have agreed to be part of the Transitional Tigray government, appointed by PM Abiy. One of them, Dr. Fasika Amdesellasie is now the Tigray region interim health bureau head, and in contrast to the stale language that is often used in [communiqués of the Transitional Government](#), [Dr. Fasika admitted civilian deaths in the battle to capture Mekelle and also said that](#) Wukro and Adigrat hospitals were completely looted and empty. The other, Mekelle's appointed mayor Atakilti Hailesillasie [admitted the presence of Eritrean troops on TV](#) and asked their withdrawal from Tigray.

The new administration tries to organise townhall meetings, but audience is not dense, and part of the discussions is held in Amharic rather than the local Tigrinya language (<https://twitter.com/qohaitostandard/status/1342855228916457472>). Participants complain that questions on current problems, such as the looting, are not answered by the “transitional” administration.

MU scholars who are currently abroad mention that several of their colleagues in Mekelle have been intimidated by PP leaders to take up administrative positions – the TPLF communications bureau indicated that action will be taken against these PP cadres ([Dimtsi Weyane broadcast on 31 December – in Tigrinya](#)).

In its 2<sup>nd</sup> January daily update [EEPA](#) reports that Mekelle University remains the only functional university in Tigray.

### **3. Example of a rural town: Hagere Selam**

In my adoptive town Hagere Selam, the big killing (around 60 civilians) and looting took place on 4 and 5 December. The Eritrean army looted the town for two days. From my house they took not only the fridge, but really everything, including clothes, plastic basins, etc. The same happened in most houses. People now self-organise, particularly to protect their neighbourhood area. All shops are closed. There is a small Saturday market. Typically, people take two meals per day, one at 10 AM and one at 5 PM. Since 5 December, there is no formal administration in the town: previous administrators do not want to work with the Transitional government, and new administrators have not been appointed. People go on foot to Mekelle to see the whereabouts of their family, what is also the occasion for telephone calls.

In the nearby village of Addi Qoylo ([May Leiba](#)), on 14 December, 30 men (including 8 priests) were executed by Eritrean troops.

We cannot enumerate every town of Tigray, but stories are likely to be very similar in other areas and towns.

#### **4. Humanitarian situation**

A new [Famine Early Warning Systems \(FEWS\) report for Ethiopia](#) has been published on 31 December. As we feared from the onset of this civil war, large parts of Tigray have now come under “Emergency” status. For December and January, the gravity of the condition might be underestimated in West Tigray (where farmers are afraid to go to their land for harvesting) and southern Tigray (locust damage). International aid workers who visited Shire in Northwest Tigray use the word “famine” (off-the-record).

[Reliefweb](#) also indicates that there are more than 2.2 million affected people in Tigray alone.

Such assessments build upon the knowledge of [antecedent rainfall](#), as well as vegetation status throughout the year (GIS analysis), combined with information on locusts, and the more difficult part, related to the war: the large number of internally displaced people, economic breakdown, and difficulties of access. We are setting up a technical group to work on this.

According to diplomatic sources, the political climate in Ethiopia has become bad enough that any international organisation that reports conditions that do not fit with the official government “Fact check” is rapidly declared 'persona non grata' and expelled from the country. According to the same sources, the UN Resident Coordinator has also been threatened with expulsion.

Even with suboptimal data, the main issue for humanitarian actors regarding Tigray is to get humanitarian access to all areas of the Tigray region.

Regarding the massacres and atrocities committed, some of the information available has already been transmitted to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (including mention of sources); this could lead to on-site investigations by international observers, if a decision to mandate investigation was taken by the [Human Rights Council](#).

#### **5. Military situation**

According to our information through telephone calls (essentially with Mekelle and Addis Ababa) and [EEPA reports](#), the Ethiopian army (with its Amhara and Eritrean allies) controls most of the major roads and towns in Tigray, as well as Western Tigray and the southern Raya plain; the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) control large rural parts and smaller towns and are able to ambush military convoys along the main roads.

The TDF try to close the roads out of Tigray for Ethiopian and Eritrean military convoys. Civilian travel is also frequently interrupted. Over the last week, fighting took place near Maychew, Samre, Wukro-Agula'i-May Makden-Mesebo, Adwa-Ahferom-Nebelet, northwest of Inticho and Selekleka. The TDF claim that in such a way they want to prevent the loots being transported out of Tigray. One informant stated that "in Selekleka, Eritrean troops tried to leave while TDF asking them to disarm before they can do so, .... then fighting continued after which Eritrean troops burned the heaped harvest (on አውሊ/awdi and ኩሊስ/kulsas) as a revenge... and went back. Same story in Nebelet area." Northbound military convoys were even blocked in Ahsea and Ziban Guyla; two places near the Eritrean border without bridge across the Mereb River on the border. It looks like the Eritrean soldiers are a bit desperate how to escape with their loots.

## 6. Recent opinion pieces

- Namhla Matshanda: [War in Tigray: The battle for what constitutes the 'Ethiopian nation'](#)
- René Lefort: [Mind over matter: Abiy Ahmed's aim to "Pentecostalize Ethiopian politics"](#)
- Tsegaye Birhanu: [The murky politics behind the Metekel massacres](#)
- Nic Cheeseman & Yohannes Woldemariam: [Abiy Ahmed's Crisis of Legitimacy](#)
- Foreign Policy Editors: [Is Ethiopia the Next Yugoslavia?](#)
- Michelle Gavin: [Amid Misinformation and Suppressed Free Speech, Ethiopian Conflict Erodes Abiy's Credibility](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [What do we know so far about the war on Tigray in Ethiopia?](#) Twitter thread: <https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1344256738812424192>

## 7. International media

- VICE: ['He's Planning to Exterminate Us All': Ethiopians Speak of Ethnic Massacres](#)
- New York Times: [Refugees Come Under Fire as Old Foes Fight in Concert in Ethiopia](#)
- Lo Spiegone: [La guerra in Etiopia non è conclusa](#) (in Italian)
- BBC: [Tigray crisis: Eritrea's role in Ethiopian conflict](#)
- National Catholic Reporter: [Aid agencies largely cut off from Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region](#)
- Washington Post: ['Everything's already been said, but since nobody was listening, we have to start again': Tragic photos of Ethiopians fleeing to Sudan](#)

## 8. Multiple war fronts for the Ethiopian army

In addition to the war with Tigray, and the longstanding conflict in Somalia, the Ethiopian army has become involved in two other recent conflicts:

- A border war with Sudan – it is about an area of about 4000 km<sup>2</sup>, located between the Ethio-Sudanese border and the Atbara river. See [Alex De Waal on BBC: Why Ethiopia and Sudan have fallen out over al-Fashaga](#)
- A war against the indigenous Gumuz insurgents in western Ethiopia. I have posted [background documentation on ResearchGate](#)

## 9. Diplomacy

In extremely diplomatic terms, the council of the [European Union has again expressed its concerns about the humanitarian situation in Tigray](#). Whereas direct EU contributions to the Ethiopian budget have been cut by 90 million euros, trade relations tend to continue unabatedly, and Ethiopian Airlines is not challenged by any destination airport for its ethnic profiling.

We could not do an exhaustive survey of all EU countries, but let's look at France's stand. The Twitter account of France's embassy <https://twitter.com/AmbafranceET> is eloquent: there is almost nothing about the civil war, human rights concerns come in line with the Ethiopian government's bias, and right on 30 December, there was a meeting at the Embassy with the Special Economic Advisor to the PM on multilateral and bilateral economic issues.

Reportedly, French companies aim at military contracts with Ethiopia. In France, there is no transparency at all about arms deals, [even the parliament is not informed](#). France hopes to get big contracts when Ethiopia will buy boats for [its soon-to-come navy](#). By the end of 2019, Peace Nobel Prize holder [Abiy Ahmed had already sent a long shopping list](#) to the French President: Rafale airplanes, helicopters, and even nuclear missiles! (The sources are in French language; little has been published about this in English)

We noted also a [German military cooperation visit to Ethiopia](#), mid-November 2020.

## 10. Destruction of Tigray's small industrial base

For the future, to put a strain on development in Tigray, large efforts have been done to destroy the small industrial base that had been constructed over the last 30 years. Factories, public and private alike have been bombed and looted. The Alameda textile factory in Adwa was [torched several times](#) after the area became controlled by the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies. Formally, the EFFORT consortium, originally in the hands of TPLF, but recently transferred to the Tigray region, has been confiscated by the Ethiopian government.

Numerous lorries, belonging to the Tigray companies "Sur Construction" and "Trans Ethiopia" have been confiscated in Mekelle and driven to Amhara Region through Soqota. 178 large lorries belonging to "Trans Ethiopia", and that were present in Djibouti for loading goods, have been handed over by

Djibouti authorities to the Ethiopian government. The drivers were not willing to cooperate, claiming that these vehicles belong to the people of Tigray. They asked asylum in Djibouti, but would have been expelled to Ethiopia, at odds with asylum regulations ([https://twitter.com/hayet\\_alem/status/1344663200533524480](https://twitter.com/hayet_alem/status/1344663200533524480)).

Whereas the transfer of factories from Tigray to Eritrea sounds like appropriation by a “pariah” state, the reasons invoked by the Ethiopian government for the confiscation of EFFORT are its’ inefficiency and corruption. Let it be precisely for such reasons that the assets had been transferred to the Tigray government about a year ago.

The alienation of EFFORT and the destruction of the industrial base, a Tigrayan regional pride and source for many employments, will further estrange Tigray’s urban youth from Abiy’s political regime.

## **11. Human Development Index 2020**

Despite whatever drawbacks that have occurred, since 1991, Ethiopia’s Human Development Index had increased tremendously by 2019, with the strongest rise in the years 2000-2014. The rise was strong for all indicators: life expectancy, education, and income ([Human Development Report 2020](#), Table 2). One would expect from politicians to build upon that, rather than warring.

## **12. Last but not least: the Caritas call to donate**

- in English ([CAFOD](#) or [CRS](#))
- en [français](#)
- in het [Nederlands](#)
- auf [Deutsch](#)

## **13. Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank the many eyewitnesses who shared information from the field, and readers who shared information they have. Each of our newsletters has also been internally reviewed by 5-10 colleagues. Information provided is correct to the best of our knowledge.

## **Digest 9. News on massacres emerges widely, but UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres is silent (10 January 2021)**

The Appeal for ceasefire and humanitarian aid to Tigray (2982 signatories on 11 January) can be [accessed here](#).

I have been busy moulding the earlier eight circulars into two articles; hence the delay of this ninth circular. The articles will be published by an international think tank. More details soon. In the mean time, the pre-prints of the articles can be consulted already:

- [Late 2020 personal diary of the war on Tigray](#)
- [The situation in Tigray at the beginning of 2021](#)

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- 9 – 1. In the media
- 9 – 2. Opinion piece
- 9 – 3. Some facts on the ground
- 9 – 4. Humanitarian situation and international reactions

#### **1. In the media**

- The Independent, 2/1/2021: [Eritrean refugees become target as old enemies join forces in chaos of Tigray conflict](#)
- Bloomberg, 9/1/2021: [Satellite Images Show Ethiopia Carnage as Conflict Continues](#)
- Associated Press, 9/1/2021: [Report: Hospitals in Ethiopia's Tigray struck by artillery](#)
- Reuters, 10/1/2021: [Ethiopian women raped in Mekelle, says soldier](#)

#### **2. Opinion piece**

- Alex De Waal, 11/1/2021: [Talking and fighting about self-determination in Ethiopia](#)

#### **3. Some facts on the ground**

- [Desert Locust Bulletin 507 \(4 January 2021\)](#)
- Night time lights still shut off in most of Tigray: [https://twitter.com/FIRIS\\_FireAlert/status/1345591856436940800](https://twitter.com/FIRIS_FireAlert/status/1345591856436940800)
- More satellite-based evidence of war in Tigray, from FIRIS: [https://twitter.com/FIRIS\\_FireAlert](https://twitter.com/FIRIS_FireAlert)



- Although it is very difficult to get information from rural areas in Tigray, we could make a detailed report on the killing of 54 civilians by ENDF (Ethiopian National Defence Forces) and Eritrean army in four *tabyas* (municipalities) located between Mekelle and Hagere Selam: [tabia Ayninbirkekin](#), mainly *qushet* (hamlet) Addi Qoylo (30); [tabia Addilal](#), *qushet* Addilal (6); [tabia Arebay](#), *qushet* Addi Amdey (4); [tabia Addi Azmera](#), *qushet* Tukhul (4), *qushet* Miheni (5), *qushet* Mesenkoy (5). This is what happened in just four out of the approximately 700 rural *tabyas* of Tigray. And it does not include deaths by starvation. Sources: <https://twitter.com/yared96018266/status/1347990518635094016/photo/1> ; <https://www.tghat.com/victim-list/> and <https://www.tigraigenocide.com/>
- In Gheralta, [Hawzien](#) has been (once again) ravaged. Vision Hotel and the lodges, Gheralta and Korkor lodge, were totally looted, only the walls remain. Civilian deaths are reported but accounting still needs to be done.
- An ENDF commander complains on TV that the people in Shire (NW Tigray) are not cooperating with them. [https://twitter.com/getachew\\_temare/status/1348742539420053506](https://twitter.com/getachew_temare/status/1348742539420053506)
- On 8 and 9 January, an ENDF military convoy was ambushed by the TDF (Tigray Defence Forces) around [Imba Alaje](#); soldiers took revenge and would have killed more than 150 civilians, mostly in the nearby town of Bora.
- [MSF provides medical assistance to some of the most affected people in Tigray](#) (11 January)
- Eighteen Tigray veterans, political and civic leaders, have been arrested over the last month. Four more were killed on the road by an armed drone attack. The prisoners have recently been transferred to Addis Ababa. Most of them are not on [the arrest warrant](#) that was announced by the Federal Police Commission. On the occasion of this transfer, Eritrean military were visible in the ETV report <https://twitter.com/Yonigussie/status/1348007929237151746> . The prisoners include:
  - **Teklewoini Assefa**, the executive director of the Relief Society of Tigray (REST); he did a lot to alleviate poverty in Tigray ( <https://twitter.com/ReliefTigray/status/1323260540542685187> ), already in the period of the 1980s civil war; REST is internationally known as a very efficient NGO.
  - Dr. **Muleta Yirga**, staff of the Economics Department at Mekelle University and founding head of the recently established Tigray Statistics Agency. His PhD thesis was about [The Role of the Developmental State in Northern Ethiopia's Raya Valley Groundwater Irrigation Project: An Institutional Economics Perspective](#).

#### 4. Humanitarian situation and international reactions

- [Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update Situation Report, 6 January 2021](#)
- Human Rights Watch calls for unhindered humanitarian access: <https://twitter.com/LaetitiaBader/status/1348582101889806336>
- **Josep Borrell**: "Talked to Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia Demeke Mekonnen and conveyed the EU's alarm over the situation in Tigray. Full and unrestricted humanitarian access must be granted. This is not an EU demand - this is international law." <https://twitter.com/JosepBorrellF/status/1347802081277718529>
- I also checked the twitter account of the UN Secretary General **Antonio Guterres**, but he is silent on Ethiopia since one month... <https://twitter.com/antonioguterres>

## **Digest 10.            Mekelle University revolts against Mulu Nega (15 January 2021)**

This is an urgent communication. We have received the unedited [minutes of the 8 January meeting of the Tigray Emergency Coordination Centre](#). It was sent to us in these colours, white letters on red background, as they wanted to stress the emergency. We decided to keep that.

More precisely, this is a meeting organized by the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) of the UN and different Humanitarian Organizations with a presence in Tigray (MSF, Red Cross, CRS, Norwegian Church Aid etc.). The minutes document that most administrators belonging to the Transitional Government of Tigray participated in the meeting.

What is reported is **catastrophic, worse even than we anticipated**. People in Tigray are dying in the street. Very little is done outside of Mekelle. “We are not able to reach 99% of the people in need”.

Beware that this is not a digest of information, like in previous emails, we simply forward the unedited minutes that were made right after the meeting.

This report is on the desk in all UN agencies, and partly used for formal reporting such as the most recent [UN's assessment of the situation in Tigray](#).

Just today, the EU also confirmed that [unless there is access for humanitarian aid operators, the EU will not disburse the planned budget support to the Ethiopian government](#).

The Appeal for ceasefire and humanitarian aid to Tigray (2982 signatories on 11 January) can be accessed here:  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6g\\_aqCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06\\_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform](https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6g_aqCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform)

**PS** Just in. See this important twitter thread about a **meeting today at Mekelle University**: [https://twitter.com/getachew\\_temare/status/1350129000132304897](https://twitter.com/getachew_temare/status/1350129000132304897)

[Note on 26/6/2024: The abridged translation of that meeting between Dr. Mulu and brave Mekelle University staff members, which was the moment when everybody understood that Abiy Ahmed and his straw man Mulu Nega had near to nil support in Tigray, was [published afterwards by Tghat](#).]

## **Digest 11. At last, witnesses of the Aksum massacre could be interviewed (23 January 2021)**

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- 11 – 2. The Aksum massacre
- 11 – 3. Sexual violence
- 11 – 4. Mekelle
- 11 – 5. Eritrean refugees in Tigray
- 11 – 6. Destruction of religious and cultural heritage
- 11 – 7. International dimensions
- 11 – 8. Opinion pieces
- 11 – 9. In the media

### **1. Starvation in Tigray**

The leaked **minutes** of the 8 January meeting of the Tigray **Emergency Coordination Centre** report (see our previous circular) has well found its way in the media, such as Washington Post: [‘Extreme urgent need’: Starvation haunts Ethiopia’s Tigray](#). The journalist triangulated the information of the report with several international NGOs.

And that concerned the situation discussed on 8 January. Two weeks later it is much worse, even. There are no operating mills so villagers can't make bread or *tayta* (fermented flatbread, also called *injera*); people are living on roasted barley and whatever else they can find. Traditional grinding of grain is between two stones shaped for that purpose, but many homesteads do not have such stones anymore, and certainly not the numerous IDPs. Two eyewitnesses tell us that people go to bushlands and collect branches and leaves of non-toxic thirst-quenching plants in order to have at least something in their stomach. Such as ሀሃት [hehot] ([sorrel or Rumex nervosus](#)) for instance. In places there are even no more matches available to light a fire for cooking.

We hear similar stories from Hawzien and Gheralta, where there is ongoing warfare, lots of looting, and damage to some of the historical rock-hewn churches. The army focuses on every younger man, even in civilian clothes, as they are suspected to be a TDF (Tigray Defence Forces) guerilla fighter.

Eyewitnesses in Adigrat, where intermittent telephone communications are possible now, tell that the men have fled to the mountains for fear of being killed. They shelter in caves, gorges and forests, but not in churches because those are not considered safe anymore. From there, many join the TDF army. A Tigrayan in Belgium mentions that he expects many friends and relatives have been killed. But it's a culture in Tigray not to tell death of relatives to someone overseas. Yet, some are now preferring to inform so that people don't face shocking social media posts reporting a friend or relative to have been killed. For instance, a Tigrayan student in Belgium learnt that there have been large massacres in their village with an uncle and two cousins killed.

The student concludes: “I am overdosed with worries for my friends or relatives. A stronger worry is now for the society at large!”

The situation is well summarised by The Economist, 21/1/2021: [Ethiopia’s government appears to be wielding hunger as a weapon](#), and a second article on 22/1/2021: [After two months of war, Tigray faces starvation](#). Besides the huge obstacles to deliver aid, at least part of it seems also to be forwarded to the Eritrean army, which has been spotted supervising the unloading in Shire for instance.

On 15 January, EU commissioner [Josep Borrell stated](#): “I have passed a clear message to the Ethiopian leadership: we are ready to help, but unless there is access for humanitarian aid operators, the EU cannot disburse the planned budget support to the Ethiopian government.”.

Borrells statement is [reworded by the Ethiopian authorities](#) as follows: “Both the Deputy Prime Minister and the High Representative have agreed to continue to work closely to scale-up the efforts in the provision of humanitarian assistance in the region and strengthen the closer collaboration between Ethiopian and the European Union.”

The EU is also to [dispatch a humanitarian negotiator to Ethiopia](#) after budget-aid suspension. We should stress that this is not about development aid, but a lump sum that is a direct contribution to the Ethiopian government’s budget. The government is lacking financial resources due to this war, as is also evidenced by the fact that all over the country government employees’ salary is reduced by 30% in order to fund the war. The sooner the war stops, the better for all people of Ethiopia who are facing inflation, soldiers killed, and salary cuts.

Personally, ever since I started carrying out research in Tigray in 1994, I observed that the **fight against famine was a major priority**; with many colleagues we tried to contribute to this through studies and projects for environmental conservation. Now we are back “there”!

## 2. The Aksum massacre

Through short phone calls (people are afraid to speak on the phone) with friends who came from Aksum to Mekelle, the information that people got killed at Maryam Tsiyon, the most important church of Ethiopian Christianity, is confirmed. People were separately engaged in collecting dead bodies from different areas and buried them hastily.

An interview has been published on [YouTube with a traumatised witness](#) regarding the Aksum massacre. It’s an 80 minutes phone interview in Amharic with a U.S. resident of Ethiopian origin. She witnessed the murders in Aksum, was evacuated as a foreign national and is now in the U.S.A. She went to Aksum to visit the church. She says the killings committed by Eritrean forces were not only in the church but also random shootings in the streets, in open shops, in homes. She says that nearby villages have also been the subject of similar shootings. She is clearly moved and traumatised (cf. 18’). The interview goes a little bit in all directions. The interviewer tries to focus the interviewee’s remarks on the chronology, on the establishing of the facts she experienced, which she witnessed.

A [translation of the interview to English](#) has been published by tghat.com.

Videos are now also emerging of the shelling of **Wuqro** between 22 and 27 November, in which 300 civilians perished: <https://twitter.com/SteezyMario7/status/1352459835787370497> and <https://twitter.com/zeaxumawit/status/1352471389740011520>

We note that such films took two months to emerge. At least people managed to salvage the documentation, despite efforts of the army to confiscate mobile phones and erase documentation.

The [Chinese website youuav.com comes with full details](#) on how Chinese-made **armed drones** carried out these and other bombings on Tigrayan towns and defence forces. The drones were directly deployed by the United Arab Emirates, from their base in Assab (Eritrea). The [EEPA Situation Report](#) No. 64 (23 January 2021) provides a summary of the Chinese article.

### 3. Sexual violence

Evidence of rape is increasingly reported, such as in Bistandsaktuelt: [Kvinne i Tigray, Etiopia: – Jeg ble plyndret, andre ble drept](#) [in Norwegian]: "This is what Eritrean soldiers usually do, when you do not want to give them your belongings. They shoot you down on the spot. Soldiers from the Ethiopian army (ENDF) do not loot. But they do rape. They rape women in front of their husbands." And also Reuters (22 January): ['Choose - I kill you or rape you': abuse accusations surge in Ethiopia's war](#).

Internationally, this is taken very seriously: the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on **Sexual Violence in Conflict**, Ms. Pramila Patten, [urges all parties to prohibit the use of sexual violence and cease hostilities in the Tigray region of Ethiopia](#). (21 January 2021)

A summary of the statement (source: <https://twitter.com/MapEthiopia/status/1352488102191894529>): In an extremely worrisome report, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten states growing concern and increasing incidents of mass rape in Tigray. We will detail some of what is said. It is very disturbing.

Ms. Patten states that very serious allegations of rape are being reported especially in Mekelle. The UN has heard that military elements are forcing women to trade sex for basic commodities (food, water, toiletries). And that there is an increased demand for contraceptives.

On top of women being forced into prostitution, there are serious allegations that men have been forced to rape family members under threat of violence.

In addition to the aforementioned sexual crimes, the UN is receiving numerous reports of Eritrean refugee camps suffering an increasing number of rapes against women and girls. 5000 Eritrean refugees have made their way to Shire and are sleeping rough to avoid abuse.

The UN calls for an immediate end to sexual violence and demands free access to all sections of Tigray in order to provide aid to those in need and also bring perpetrators of rape to justice.

#### 4. Mekelle

On the telephone, one friend could confirm that things are getting a little better in Mekelle. Banks have opened, cafes and hotels are opening slowly. Civil servants have started to get back to work despite not receiving regular salaries. There has also been food assistance to around 70,000 people through *tabya* (sub-district) offices (30 kg wheat per person + oil). Out of Mekelle, it is much as before with nothing of everything. He said he had heard that electricity had been restored the last days to Shire and Axum (Adigrat two weeks ago). But that there is still not any telephone connection outside of Mekelle and recently Adigrat.

When people go to Mekelle, often on foot, they interact with a **flexible politico-military environment**. For instance, a town like Adwa nominally under ENDF control, has no administrative bodies; it can be 3-4 days without presence of military. The villages surrounding the town are a kind of no-man's land. The army is not there, but an Eritrean or ENDF military unit may decide to go for terrorising a village or for looting. People then again move further into areas without roads. Some 20-25 km away from the town they will feel safe. The Tigray forces are there and the army cannot come. Such places count a lot of IDPs who moved there to be safe from Ethiopian and Eritrean armies. When approaching Mekelle, the army is again occasionally present, with the city fully under control of ENDF and Eritrean soldiers.

When telephoning Mekelle, we hear about daily killings by shooting. Military sometimes also rob people's money and mobile phones at gunpoint. Among many others, [Journalist Dawit Kebede \(Tigray TV\) has been shot dead](#) in Mekelle, together with his lawyer, upon release from police custody.

#### 5. Eritrean refugees in Tigray

A colleague has managed to talk with one Eritrean refugee who came with his wife from Shemelba refugee camp in Tigray to Addis Ababa by bus on Saturday 17 February, as well as with another Eritrean refugee who arrived in Addis the same day from Hitsats camp. It seems there is nothing left of these two refugees camps after being looted and basically destroyed, as also [documented by analysis of satellite imagery](#). The refugees have relocated to the two camps around May Tsebri (Adi Harush and May Ayni), or traveled to Addis Ababa or other places where they feel more safe. First, Eritrean soldiers came and tried to take those who were wanted by the Eritrean government for political reasons and eventually sent them back to Eritrea. Afterwards Tigrayan militia groups chased the Eritrean soldiers out. Several refugees were killed in these different skirmishes. He said he had never been so afraid in all his life. They had not had any food rations for 2-3 months. "We ate what we could find, even plants and leaves", he said. On the travel to Addis, they had to pay much more than normal bus fare prices for the trip: 200 Birr from Sheleba to Shire, 1000 from Shire to Mekelle, and 1500 from Mekelle to

Addis - per person. There is also very [strong language from UNHCR boss Filippo Grandi](#) on the lack of access to the Shimelba and Hintsas refugee camps.

## 6. Destruction of religious and cultural heritage

Besides Aksum and many other churches in Tigray, the EEPA report for 14 January states that the 6th century monastery of Debre Damo was bombed using heavy artillery and looted by Eritrean troops. Also more [detailed information is emerging on artefacts stolen from Negash mosque](#).

The researchers and fellows of the Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies at Hamburg University have launched an [appeal for the salvation of the cultural heritage of Tigray](#).

The Telegraph notes on 17/1/2021: [Churches and mosques in Tigray 'vandalised and looted' in Ethiopian purge](#).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is silent on these destructions of its own churches. Patriarch Abune Mathias is reportedly not allowed to issue statements. An [Ethiopian Catholic Church delegation visited its diocese in Adigrat](#), reporting damages to churches; buildings of Wukro St. Mary's Catholic College have been broken and looted, with computers stolen. At their meeting with the interim administration, government officials said 4.5 million people needed emergency support all over Tigray.

## 7. International dimensions

The [border conflict between Ethiopia and Sudan for the Al-Fashaga triangle](#) continues, with Sudan now controlling most of the area. Fighting is ongoing and [Sudantribune \[in Arabic\]](#) mentions the participation of Eritrean soldiers on the side of the Ethiopian army. Besides the Tigray war, the approximate controlled areas of this border war are also [mapped by the Ethiopia Map team](#), with many uncertainties).

Filling and operation of the GERD reservoir on the Blue Nile are [another major source of conflict between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt](#), that has flared up since the Ethiopian army became stretched and weakened due to the war against Tigray.

**Somalian** mothers are protesting because they fear for their sons who had been sent to Eritrea for military training. [Reportedly the Somali soldiers have been taken to fight in Tigray](#), where some got killed.

Diplomatic sources mention that there is a risk for an outright **regional war** in the Horn, involving Ethiopia and all neighbouring countries.

## 8. Opinion pieces

- Fassil Hailu: [Hawks and doves: The great divide over the war in Tigray](#)
- Emebet Getachew; Mehari Taddele Maru; Yohannes Gedamu: [Could a National Dialogue Solve Ethiopia's Political Crisis?](#)
- Ahmed Hassen: [Is Ethiopia coming together or falling apart?](#)
- Farid Abdulhamid: [How neoliberalism is fanning the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia](#)
- Paulos Tesfagiorgis: [AU Commission chair's stance on Ethiopian civil war sabotages the union's peace mission](#)

## 9. In the media

- Globe & Mail, 17 January: [Refugee camps are torched and hospitals looted as starvation looms in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- BBC, 19 January: [Ethiopia Tigray crisis: Fear of mass starvation](#)
- Al Jazeera, 19 January: [Starvation crisis looms as aid groups seek urgent Tigray access](#)
- Le Monde, 18 January: [« Les gens meurent de faim » : en Ethiopie, le Tigré au bord du désastre humanitaire](#) [in French]
- Reuters, 20 January: [Ethiopians dying, hungry and fearful in war-hit Tigray: agencies](#)
- Arte, 8 January: [Sudan: Die Tigray fliehen aus Äthiopien](#) [in German]
- Mediapart, 22 January: [En Ethiopie, la France partagée entre business et défense des droits humains](#) [in French] (if interested, we have an **English translation** of this article at hand)
- The New Humanitarian, 12 January: Ethiopia: [A partial view of the humanitarian fallout emerges in Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 14 January: [Major violations of international law at Tigray refugee camps: U.N.](#)
- New York Times, 22 January: [On 'Rooftop of Africa,' Ethiopia's Troops Hunt Fugitive Former Rulers](#)



## **Digest 12. Eritrean soldiers carry looted goods by camel caravans (26 January 2021)**

In order to make our appeal better known, we have made a short version of it on the global petitioning site Avaaz.org: [Allow immediate and full humanitarian access and stop starvation in war-affected Tigray](https://secure.avaaz.org/community_petitions/en/the_ethiopian_authorities_including_the_ministry_to_allow_immediate_and_full_humanitarian_access_to_waraffected_tigray_to_prevent_famine/?t=NJbYcb).

May we ask you to sign that petition also:

[https://secure.avaaz.org/community\\_petitions/en/the\\_ethiopian\\_authorities\\_including\\_the\\_ministry\\_to\\_allow\\_immediate\\_and\\_full\\_humanitarian\\_access\\_to\\_waraffected\\_tigray\\_to\\_prevent\\_famine/?t=NJbYcb](https://secure.avaaz.org/community_petitions/en/the_ethiopian_authorities_including_the_ministry_to_allow_immediate_and_full_humanitarian_access_to_waraffected_tigray_to_prevent_famine/?t=NJbYcb)

Importantly, after signing you will get the opportunity to share it through Facebook and Twitter.

Thanks to colleague B.R. for taking the initiative!

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### **In short some other very recent news about Tigray**

- The Guardian, 24 January 2021: Simon Tisdall (senior foreign affairs commentator): [Ethiopia's leader must answer for the high cost of hidden war in Tigray](#)
- The Guardian, 24 January 2021: [Fabled ark could be among ancient treasures in danger in Ethiopia's deadly war](#)
- BBC, 25 January 2021: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: 'My wife died giving birth to twins while we hid'](#)
- Associated Press, 26 January 2021: [Witnesses: Eritrean soldiers loot, kill in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- OCHA has published a map of the (poor) [accessibility for humanitarian aid to Tigray](#) (download takes some time)

And, a film shot in the Tigray border town Enticho, showing **Eritrean soldiers carrying looted goods** by a camel caravan: <https://twitter.com/MapEthiopia/status/1353853399842738177>

## Digest 13. “It’s just fake news” (31 January 2021)

The human rights and humanitarian situation in Tigray stays very bad and worsens. The international community, including now also [France](#), reacts but so far it remains at the level of “strong words”. From our side, we continue sharing information, including an initiative by younger colleagues:

the new broad petition on



in numerous languages.

Sharing with your personal network is very important for an effective result.

You can do so through Facebook or Twitter after signing.

[ENGLISH](#) [العربية](#) [DEUTSCH](#) [РУССКИЙ](#) [FRANÇAIS](#) [ESPAÑOL](#) [PORTUGUÊS](#)  
[BAHASA INDONESIA](#) [한국어](#) [日本語](#) [NEDERLANDS](#) [ITALIANO](#) [עברית](#)  
[TÜRKÇE](#) [POLSKI](#) [ROMÂNĂ](#) [ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ](#)

(Arabic and Japanese translations are underway; the initiators still look for assistance by native Korean, Romanian and Greek speakers, in order to address all language platforms available on Avaaz)

### Acknowledgments

Thank you to all who contribute to this effort for peace and humanitarian aid to Tigray: contacting academics, distributing petitions, translating, initiating them. Thanks for media contacts, witnesses, database handler, twitterers, text reviewers, PR with politicians, needs assessment, NGO activities, documentation of war crimes in view of future court cases (ICC, Belgian or German courts), ...

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#### 1. “It’s just fake news”, or “please take the Ethiopian government’s perspective”...

On 26 January, the EU Joint Development & Foreign Affairs Parliament Committee gave a hard time to the Ethiopian Ambassador Hirut in relation to the humanitarian crisis in Tigray. The full hearing can be

seen here [https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/afet-deve-joint-meeting\\_20210126-1645-COMMITTEE-AFET-DEVE\\_vd](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/afet-deve-joint-meeting_20210126-1645-COMMITTEE-AFET-DEVE_vd) (starting at 16:52).

Devex summarised the meeting as follows on 27 January 2021: [Ethiopia calls for 'perspective' from donors over Tigray conflict](#).

The Ambassador's speech was echoed in an opinion paper by Jon Abbink: [The Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia: Post-War Ramifications and International Response](#), in which he minimises civilian sufferings, for sure without having contacted people on the ground in Tigray.

Our friend, medical doctor André Crismer wrote the following letter to Prof. Abbink:

"Dear sir,

I've read with interest your paper in theglobalobservatory.org.

As a medical doctor, I've known Tigray since 1987: there has been no mass starvation since Mengistu's time; The risk is presently very real! I've seen huge developments in health centres, hospitals, schools, soil protection, people enjoying peace, 20 years gain in life expectancy !

I now receive many information from friends living in Tigray who are not TPLF members : they speak about murders, sexual violence, generalized looting (house by house, schools, hospitals, churches...), lack of food, lack of medicine..

Obviously, there was disagreement between TPLF leaders and Abiy and a huge lack of dialogue.

I write, trying to be on the side of the civilian victims. It seems you have chosen your camp. I'm not sure the situation is as simple as you describe it.

Sincerely,

Andre Crismer"

No answer was received by André. His worries and pain are confirmed by MSF, 29 January: [Ethiopia: "If hospitals can't be accessed, then people die at home"](#), and UNICEF, 27 January: [12 weeks into the conflict, 'deeply troubling' situation for children in Tigray](#). And, in the mean time, a very graphic video has emerged showing the killing of kids in downtown Mekelle (ዓሰርተ ኣርባዕተ; district 14) on 28 November 2020 ( [https://twitter.com/hayet\\_alem/status/1355182116787654658](https://twitter.com/hayet_alem/status/1355182116787654658) ).

## 2. The plight in Irob and Gulomakeda woredas

Kjetil Tronvoll notes that as all minorities, the Irob minority group in Tigray is particularly vulnerable in the war as it straddles the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, and part of its homeland was granted to Eritrea by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. Killings, looting and coercive «re-identification» as Eritreans are reported. ( <https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1355468562782183427> )

We had a telephone contact with an older man from an Irob village. He confirmed that Eritrean identity cards are being handed out. Literally everything has been stolen. People only have the clothes that they are wearing. Many have fled to the mountains and are hiding in caves (just like 20 years ago). There's no food, no money. Two of his grandchildren were killed. He had come to Mekelle to collect cash and buy some food. In major towns, markets have somehow opened again. Mekelle is 150 km from his village, but the closest place with functional banks – they can use the road when no local fighting is going on.

A dedicated lobbyist for the Eritrean regime, Bronwyn Bruton, while denegating Eritrean involvement against all evidence, recently justified the occupation and plight of the people in Irob and Gulomakeda woredas, stating that Eritrea was “just” occupying the contested border areas ( <https://twitter.com/BronwynBruton/status/1354885214179385347> ). Note that Bruton works for the Atlantic Council, a think tank with financial backing of a Canadian mining firm, [Nevsun](#), which operates exclusively in Eritrea.

## 3. Interview with a senior Tigrayan leader

As it is extremely rare to get a consistent and lengthy interview with somebody who lives the conditions of the areas under control of the Tigray government, we recommended listening to or reading the transcript of the call between colleagues [Mulugeta Gebrehiwot](#) (founder of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University; now in Tigray) and [Alex de Waal](#) (World Peace Foundation), that took place on 27 January 2021.

[“They Have Destroyed Tigray, Literally”](#): [Mulugeta Gebrehiwot speaks from the mountains of Tigray](#); the webpage includes the recording of the telephonic interview, and full transcript.

## 4. In the media

- Daily news can be followed through the [Situation Reports of EEPA](#)
- Der Spiegel, 24 January: [Krieg in Äthiopien »Hunderttausende könnten verhungern«](#) [in German]
- NPO Radio 1, 25 January: [In Tigray is aan alles tekort](#) [in Dutch]
- EUobserver, 26 January: [Finland to lead EU diplomacy on Ethiopia](#)
- Le Figaro, 26 January: [Éthiopie: au Tigré, la guerre réveille le spectre de la famine](#) [in French]

- Radio France Internationale, 26 January: [Tigré: l'Érythrée engagée dans les combats malgré les dénégations](#) [in French]
- Associated Press, 27 January: [US says Eritrean forces should leave Tigray immediately](#)
- Morning Star, 27 January: [Ethiopian government accused of threatening to kill Tigrayans that refuse to join ruling party](#)
- Der Standard (Wien), 28 January: [Äthiopiens angeblich „beendeter Krieg“](#) [in German] (PDF available on request)
- Associated Press, 28 January: [US 'directly' presses Eritrea to withdraw forces from Tigray](#)
- Eritrea Hub, 28 January: [Eritrea's mass mobilisation for a "final offensive" in the Tigray war](#)
- Irish Times, 29 January: [Conflict in Tigray: 'What we don't know could be even more disturbing'](#)
- Associated Press, 30 January: [Ethiopia says Tigray back to 'normalcy;' witnesses disagree.](#)
- Associated Press, 31 January: [Fugitive Tigray leader reportedly speaks out after months](#)

## 5. Opinion pieces

- Maaza Mengiste: [Ethiopia's Long War](#)
- Robert Rotberg: [A pogrom is happening in Ethiopia](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Ethiopia re-enters the abyss of war](#)
- Richard Reid: [Ethiopia's current crisis is rooted in a long history of regional and ethnic defiance towards the political centre](#)
- Washington Post, The Post's View: [Ethiopia's leader won the Nobel Peace Prize. Now he's accused of war crimes.](#)

## 6. The Eritrean people's (musical) voice of solidarity

References to Eritrean participation in the war and atrocities committed should be understood as a characteristic of the regime, and its military indoctrination system: the infamous Sawa camp. See for instance this article on Euronews: [Young Eritreans Would Rather Risk Death at Sea Than Let Their Leaders Take Their Freedom.](#)

War crimes are committed by the Eritrean army in Tigray, and yet there are longstanding bonds among the Tigray and Eritrean people. For instance, three music works have been released by refugee Eritrean artists in one month, disclosing pain related to the ongoing atrocities in Tigray.

- [Kibrom Hailemariam and Luwam Brhane - Hatney \[ሐትነይ - "my aunt"\] - released 29 January 2021](#)
- [Yonas, Fnan, and Kubrom - 'Tigraway' \[ትግራዊይ = "Tigrayan"\] - released 25 December 2020](#)
- [Kiflom Ykealo - 'Hizbi Tigray' \[ህዝቢ ትግራይ = "people of Tigray"\] - released 25 December 2020](#)

Despite the ongoing atrocities by Eritrean soldiers, these songs show the dilemma that Eritreans are facing. Here, the singers express empathy, solidarity and brotherhood with Tigray.

## Digest 14.        **Direct contact with residents from Aksum and other places** **== President Sahlework and Daniel Kibret come to rub salt in the wounds** **(10 February 2021)**

Before going into the details of eyewitness reports, please read this [Joint-Statement by High-Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell, Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen and Commissioner Janez Lenarčič](#) (8 February 2021). In my view the international community should really stop talking about “concerns”. Severe **sanctions** are needed...

We are hundreds of people all over the world that contribute to the solidarity initiatives, in different ways. Again, thank you all! Sometimes, people ask **what motivates us** to do all these efforts for the people in Tigray? Well, in my case, this is related to longstanding witnessing of the dynamism of a society that is currently been broken by war and genocidal actions. Just out, [Patrick Augenstein’s film \(26 minutes\) summarises our monitoring of the environmental changes that have occurred in Tigray](#) over the last 30 years – the film was realised just before the war started, and still expresses the positive mood of that moment. That’s the time when people told me: “look, Tigray is the only region in Ethiopia with peace...” For sure, as soon as we can, we will return to the 400 monitored landscapes in Tigray to record the physical damage inflicted by the war.

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- 14 – 5. Universities in Tigray
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- 14 – 8. Humanitarian aid
- 14 – 9. Situation in Mekelle and other major towns
- 14 – 10. Solidarity
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- 14 – 12. Opinion pieces

#### 1. Destructions and mass killings

- Ethiopia Insight (8 February) published this report of somebody who crossed Tigray on foot: [“The sadism is very disturbing”: Two months on the run in Tigray](#)
- Photos of destroyed rural settlements, in the Raya highlands, west of Korem: <https://twitter.com/HailuKe84/status/1357411474369622016>
- One of the numerous mass killings by ENDF, in Debre Abay, some 50 km SW of Shire, has been documented in an extremely graphic way by Map Ethiopia:

<https://twitter.com/MapEthiopia/status/1358650959505809408> . A massacre filmed by the ENDF perpetrators themselves! So sad...

An eyewitness from a village near Hagere Selam mentions the names of several killed farmers whom I know from previous fieldwork. When fighting started in the area, the people moved from the village to the mountains; after a time they thought that fighting was finished and they came back to their homesteads. The eyewitness' father ran into the soldiers who were slaughtering his cattle. The dog which had been with them to the mountains started barking at the soldiers and they shot it. Afterwards they started hitting his father and he quickly became unconscious. They hit him very badly but he did not feel it. They left him for dead. After that, the villagers found him and they cured him using local medicine. "The soldiers were asking very basic information: where is this village, where is that village? They have shot other people in the mountains, between rock outcrops, some in a gully, and they left them dead over there. They wanted them to be eaten by hyenas."

An eyewitness near Hagere Selam states that the soldiers are searching [after the Tigray leaders] in every cave and every enclosure. They moved to Inda Abba Hadera and the gorges around there. Another eyewitness states that the killing of innocent persons continues, on a daily base. "A few days ago, there was fighting in [Inda Abba Hadera](#)". The Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers warn the people: "for each soldier that is killed by *woyane* (a generic name for TPLF, the Tigray Defence Forces TDF and any Tigrayan resistance), we will kill 5 or 10 villagers".

## 2. Putting salt on the wounds

On 7 February, **Ethiopian President Sahlework** visited Mekelle. One of our contacts in Mekelle mentioned that she was not welcome in Mekelle. Solicited members of the civil society did not show up during the visit. The president then insisted to meet raped women in the hospital. When she went there, the women were terrified, as if Satan suddenly appeared to catch them. Very few photos or footage has been made public about this visit, because the atmosphere was really hostile. The [Ethiopian News Agency published one photo](#) of Sahlework, who is trying to interact with internally displaced people. The sad face of the woman on the photo, and also those of all the people sitting behind her, says it all.

Yet, the official propaganda is that all people in Tigray are happy after Abiy restored law and order! It seems that a propaganda film is being shot in Mekelle, these days, aiming to demonstrate the peoples' happiness...

A video recording of a meeting between commanders of the **Ethiopian army** and the local community in the town of Agula'i has also been leaked. See: <https://www.facebook.com/dimtsiweyane/videos/240480084276166/> (starting at 2'48"). Local people express their anger. For those who do not understand Tigrinya and Amharic, this is the summary of their sayings: "We have known the Ethiopian army for so many years. The soldiers were disciplined. What's happening now is unprecedented. They are now behaving in the same way as the

Eritrean army. They rape, they loot, they steal jewelry and mobile phones. They go from house to house and we have to hide our daughters. They are drunkards and they shoot on civilians.”

Such films that are smuggled out of Tigray remain a major source of information, in **absence** of access by independent **journalists**. According to [Bistandsaktuelt](#), three armed men (presumably pertaining to Ethiopia’s secret services) attacked and brutalised journalist Lucy Kassa (Al Jazeera, Bistandsaktuelt) in her home in Addis Ababa on 9 February 2021. They took her laptop and threatened her with death if she continued to write about the situation in Tigray region. Norwegian authorities and the International Federation of Journalists have been alerted.

### **3. Internally displaced people**

- The NGO World Vision has posted an interview with a woman from Humera who is now refugee in Mekelle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g4eCCatvTU&feature=youtu.be>
- Based on inside information, we have prepared and distributed a report on the more than [44,000 IDPs in the Shire campus of Aksum University](#).
- Health centres in Shire also are in dire condition. Reuters, 8 February: [‘People die at home’: Tigray medical services struggle after turmoil of war](#)
- At the southwestern outskirts of Mekelle, about 700 refugees from Irob are hosted in a school. Authorities do not help them; the nearby church has asked the inhabitants to help with food and clothes. An eyewitness also mentions that photo-operations about food distribution continue to be held: lorries come – photos are made – lorries go...

### **4. Destruction of refugee camps**

- VICE, 3 February: [Refugee Camps in Ethiopia Appear to Have Been Systematically Destroyed](#).
- UCAnews, 5 Februari: [Eritrean Priest says thousands of refugees in Tigray deported to Eritrea](#)

### **5. Universities in Tigray**

At Mekelle University, the staff tries to restart courses. The students have to register, starting from 6 February. As Adigrat and Aksum Universities have largely been destroyed, the students of those universities also have to register at Mekelle University, which is also hosting the academic staff of these universities, so that they can continue their courses. One mother of a student says however: “my son will not be going to the University - how could ...” Contacted, MU staff also wonder whether students will accept to travel from far away to Mekelle in these difficult times.

Some weeks ago, there has been a meeting of MU staff with the new Prosperity Party head of the Tigray administration, Dr. Mulu. It was a very chaotic meeting, where staff raised all the issues on famine and extreme human rights abuses. See this recording: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rV113Jc0Y8w&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rV113Jc0Y8w&feature=emb_logo) . Participants in the meeting



confirm that, by the end of the discussion, Dr. Mulu literally said: “if you don't agree with me, you can just go and join the fighters in the ቤረክ [berekha] (remote and rugged areas)!”

Separately, two colleagues from Mekelle University have mentioned that the content of our newsletters is circulating among the staff – people talk about it on the phone. They are happy that so much information on what is really going reaches the outside world. “This solidarity is so important for us, thanks a lot!”

MU aims to start rehabilitation activities; a colleague mentions that it is very important to link with the international community for this.

Also in the academic world, there is the story and the plight of Mulugeta Gebregziabher, a professor of Tigrayan origin at the Medical University of South California, which [is worth reading](#).

## **6. Cultural heritage and the Aksum massacres**

- Apollo, the international art magazine, 3 February: [Tigray's people and their heritage urgently need protecting](#)
- The Global Society of Tigray Scholars writes to the UNESCO President, Audrey Azoulay, referring to the 1972 World Heritage Convention and the Convention of the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The scholars state that “there exist widespread and evidence-based reports of genocidal ethnic cleansing and killings, starvation through a deliberate isolation of the region, vandalization of public and private properties and destruction and looting of cultural and sacred sites.”
- A French-German initiative of scholars has started, in cooperation with Tigrayan scholars in exile, documenting any damage to cultural and historical heritage in Tigray, as a basis for international action and future efforts of rehabilitation.

With the restoration of telephone lines to **Aksum**, we managed to talk with a church servant about the killings in November. At first he could simply not speak; he is a strong man but is totally traumatised. In a second call, a few days later, he says the reported number of 750 is not true, as the truth would be in thousands. “People (mostly men but also women) were killed in mass within the church compound. They raped women from the church. Killings and rape didn't stop in the church, it continued throughout the town and to the rural areas. They do whatever they want... they destroy things, loot, rape and slaughter.” According to him, there was shelling towards the church from a distant location, but none of the church structures was hit.

He mentioned that there is still active fighting in the vicinity and that civilians are still being slaughtered (as he says it: ይሕረዱ) both by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers. He says “Eritreans are not only slaughtering people. They rape women, kill, loot people's houses, they cut legs and remove eyes and leave people to die”. He adds: “Just killing would have been fine.”

Despite all that, he mentioned that no '*kahin*' (collective name for deacons and priests) was killed at Tsion church, unlike in other churches. He believes the ark is still there. "As there is a fear for looting the church including the ark, residents take turn to protect it, they sleep there".

Refugees coming from Aksum are telling their experiences to family members. Also here, the reports are about people being killed in the streets and in their houses, in some cases all the male inhabitants of a house, sometimes everyone. Aksum is as the heart of Tigrayan religious identity, which may explain why it had been especially targeted. By now the situation is described as calm, but people are terrified by their experience. Still basic services such as banks have not resumed.

In solidarity with Aksum, please listen to this Ge'ez gospel song recorded at Aksum last year: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7kiCAYnd7U&feature=youtu.be>

## 7. Genocide

On 5 February, the U.N. [special adviser on genocide prevention warned that without urgent measures the risk of atrocity crimes “remains high and likely to get worse.”](#)

In an interview with the Hoover Institute, [Rwandan president Paul Kagame suggests](#) that the situation in Tigray should be addressed internationally. “The situation is too worrying and the toll too high to be left only to Ethiopia or AU”. With such a statement pronounced by the president of Rwanda, the implicit link to “**genocide**” is unavoidable.

## 8. Humanitarian aid

- AFP, 7 February: [UN boosts food aid to Ethiopia's Tigray over starvation fears](#)
- FEWS NET report [maps half of Tigray as “Emergency”](#) status with regard to famine as of February 2021
- Norwegian Refugee Council, 1 February: [Statement by Secretary General Jan Egeland: Aid still not reaching Tigray](#). A disabused Tigrayan writes: “Thank you for being candid. The truth is that humanitarian aid is the last card the invading forces want to use in the project of Tigray genocide. The first part was to destroy the livelihood of the people. The international community has failed to read the intention and act.” (<https://twitter.com/Gebre Kirstos G/status/1356234165293821953>)

On 6 February, **WFP** chief David Beasley writes: Important breakthroughs in Ethiopia today! WFP and the Government of Ethiopia have agreed on concrete steps to expand access for humanitarians across Tigray, and WFP will scale up its operations. Nearly 3 million people need our help NOW and we have no time to waste. (<https://twitter.com/WFPChief/status/1358131700929331203>). This is but the implementation of an agreement signed on 2 December 2020 already. Beasley travelled then to Kwiha and visited the warehouses with supply stock ([https://twitter.com/MoP\\_Ethiopia/status/1358315581477429250](https://twitter.com/MoP_Ethiopia/status/1358315581477429250)).

Many questions remain. Will the WFP directly oversee the distribution? Where's it going to be handed out? Do people really get the number of kilograms they sign for? Are there going to be political conditions like "formally submitting to PP"? [OCHA official Jens Laerke states that](#) it was "less of a problem" to deliver food aid which is being warehoused in Mekelle. "The problem is access both to get into Tigray in the first place and also getting from Mekelle into the countryside where most of the people in need are."

On 8 February, the Ethiopian government officially dissolved the boards of the two largest local NGOs in Tigray, which are largely trusted by people in the region. The Tigray Development Association (**TDA**) and the Relief Society of Tigray (**REST**) will now formally be governed by 'a caretaker administrative board', and hence *de facto* may become inactive. Their assets also may be spoiled, just like what happened to the Tigray economic trust EFFORT. This happens at the very moment when the Tigrayan aid agencies are more needed than ever before.

On [8 February, the EU has stated](#) that it "remains very concerned by the tragic humanitarian crisis unfolding in Tigray and its regional implications. Three months into the conflict, despite small openings, the limitations to humanitarian access to Tigray continue to prevent the provision of humanitarian assistance to address the immensity of needs, avert the risk of famine and prevent further loss of life." In response to this statement, on 9 February, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://twitter.com/fanatelevision/status/1359205642989404160>), basically replies that all is going well. Remarkably, they do not deny the presence of Eritrean troops, and as expected there is no invite to international journalists to visit Tigray.

## **9. Situation in Mekelle and other major towns**

Mekelle is now considered safer than other towns and rural areas because of the uncontrolled presence of soldiers in those places. Hence, people in Mekelle try to host their relatives; and in turn, the richer people from Mekelle try to temporarily move to Addis Ababa.

An eyewitness from Mekelle mentioned that it is so obvious that Eritrean soldiers are present, as they are even dominant among the occupying soldiers. They are now wearing uniforms of the Ethiopian army, and of the Tigray Defence Forces, to hide their belonging to the Eritrean army. They can be easily recognised by their Eritrean accent, when they speak Tigrinya, and their incapacity to communicate in Amharic. "We are all wondering how the Eritrean soldiers can be so brutal. Of course, during their training in the Sawa camp, they are indoctrinated with a lot of hatred against Tigrayans." Indeed, Tigrayans have been declared responsible for twenty years of isolation of Eritrea and poverty, with which the Eritrean dictator had managed to externalise all problems of his government. Our witness continues: "Another aspect is that a large number of the Eritrean soldiers are not Tigrinya speakers. They are from other ethnic groups. Many of the young Tigrinya speakers from Eritrea have migrated to Europe. It is especially the Tigrinya speakers who migrate out of Eritrea. Of course the bosses in the Eritrean army mainly are Tigrinya speakers. There are many speculations about the deeper reasons. Some people think that it is about religion, that the Eritrean soldiers would be Muslims in majority [Note: this is not confirmed by our scarce witness reports]. That does not appear to be the main thing. The main thing may rather be that they speak other languages and hence feel less compassion for the

Tigrayans. In any case, the way in which they behave in this war is not normal, even in the framework of a war.”

A witness from Mekelle also mentions the importance of information. “We have a lot of information from television. For instance we hear about Somalia, that mothers are demonstrating. In Amhara the mothers do not demonstrate. Those mothers also know that many of their boys are killed in Tigray but they hope still, for instance that their son will get a land in Western Tigray.”

Another person from Mekelle says that: “outside Mekelle there is war in every *woreda* (district), but the TDF soldiers are becoming better. Every day they are winning a battle. A lot of youth is joining the Tigray fighters, they see no other option. Nowadays, we have a lot of information from the media. Particularly, we are listening to the news of Tigray Media House (TMH). They tell us everything about the battles. And also what is happening internationally, for instance the claims for humanitarian aid that are issued from Belgium and from Europe. We know our friends. Dimtsi Weyane radio has started emitting also”. People watch this chain which transmits through satellite; it is the only chain that gives the Tigray viewpoint. The other Ethiopian chains’ information does not at all correspond with what the people observe around them. So, the people watch Tigray Media House especially the news at 9:00 o'clock in the evening, or they watch music programmes. Of course there is only television in Mekelle and a few other towns with electricity.

Early February, there were reports by telephone about heavy fighting again near Samre southwest of Mekelle, now the seventh time that heavy battles were fought there. On 8 February the army killed five civilians in Addi Awuso nearby. When the soldiers entered Samre, one person was shot. There are reports of Eritrean troops entering to many places deep inside Tigray, but also of preparations for a TDF counter-offensive. There have been armed confrontations with the Eritrean army in the area between Aksum and Shire.

On 9 February, there was active **protest** in Mekelle the whole day. It started when people were forced to go to a meeting with a delegation of elders and religious leaders that came from Addis Ababa for a planned three days stay. According to insiders, a particular reason for the protests was that the visiting delegation included [Daniel Kibret](#), the main right wing extremist of the Ethiopian Orthodox church and one of the closest advisors of PM Abiy Ahmed. Most businesses were closed; the youth blocked roads and faced the soldiers. At least one of them was killed and many injured were left in the streets. Mekelle's elders and religious leaders refused to meet the delegation that came from Addis – they left in a hurry after a day.

## 10. Solidarity

- The international appeal launched by scientists remains at the core of our network: “*Tigray (Ethiopia) - In absence of major international diplomacy and rescue, towards a repeat of the great famine of 1984-1985* ”; please forward this link to colleagues: [https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6gaqCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06\\_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform](https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6gaqCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform).
- The [Avaaz petition](#) has obtained 5500 signatures on 10/2/2021; please continue sharing it through Facebook and Twitter.

- New **initiative towards parliamentarians**. Colleagues have prepared a template letter to MPs, asking for their biggest effort to increase international pressure in favour of immediate and full humanitarian access to the region. The template letter can be downloaded here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bo5zcu9c5l3b96g/AACGAgP26ZuhYAH8g-SBKlwCa?dl=0>. Please customise it and send it to parliamentarians in your country, region or state. We will centrally send it out to all MEPs of the European Parliament.

#### 11. In the media, in addition to the articles mentioned in the previous sections

- Financial Times, 31 January: [Ethiopia accused of using ethnic profiling to target Tigrayans](#)
- BBC, 1 February: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: What a blind man's death reveals](#)
- New African, 2 February: [Ethiopia's civil conflict is over – or is it?](#)
- Associated Press, 3 February: [Ex-Peace Corps volunteers plead with US for help on Tigray](#)
- VoA, 4 February: [Diplomats Decry Violence, Call for Withdrawal of Eritrean Troops from Ethiopia](#)
- Washington Post, 4 February: [US urges Ethiopia's PM to allow 'immediate' help to Tigray](#)
- Associated Press, 5 February: [UN: Situation in Ethiopia's Tigray now 'extremely alarming'](#)
- Church Times (UK), 5 February: [Thousands of refugees missing in Tigray](#)
- Bloomberg, 5 February: [First there was a war, now Ethiopia faces a debt crisis.](#)
- Der Spiegel, 6 February: [Sudan fordert im Streit um Nil-Staudamm internationale Vermittlung](#) [in German]
- Eritrea Hub, 7 February: Tigray: [The position of displaced people in the town Shire](#)
- La Libre Belgique, 9 February: [L'Onu pourra accéder au Tigré](#) [in French]
- Associated Press, 9 February: [Ethiopia gives UN green light to deploy 25 staff to Tigray](#)
- AFP, 9 February: [Mekelle – Clashes and death as protest erupts](#)

#### 12. Opinion pieces

- Saba of Axsum: [Don't call me Woyane. I don't deserve it.](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Ethiopia at risk of another long-term war](#)
- Goitom Tsegay: [For years I opposed the TPLF, but I also oppose this war on Tigray.](#)
- Bruck Kebede: [My Response to PM Abiy's Op-Ed on Project Syndicate](#)
- Hardin Lang and David Del Conte: [Five Steps the Biden Administration Needs to Take on the Crisis in Tigray](#)
- Alex de Waal: [From Ethiopia's Tigray region to Yemen, the dilemma of declaring a famine](#)

## **Digest 15. International media outlets report the Aksum and Debre Abay massacres == Appraisal of humanitarian aid to Tigray (20 February 2021)**

In these last days, two international media outlets have published impressive reports on gross war crimes in Tigray:

- Associated Press, 18 February 2021: [‘Horrible’: Witnesses recall massacre in Ethiopian holy city](#)
- The Telegraph, 19 February 2021: [‘You should have finished off the survivors’: Ethiopian army implicated in brutal war crime video](#)

Ethiopian president Sahlework Zewdie published a statement about the war crimes in Tigray (<https://twitter.com/POEthiopia/status/1362836907164581889/photo/1>): “we cannot pretend we do not see or hear what is unfolding”. The statement is late and minimalistic. Yet, in diplomatic terms - coming from the President of a country - this is unusual strong language clearly directed towards those ministers of the Ethiopian Government who are still in “full denial” mode.

**Please continue sharing the following to your networks**

**Scientists’ Appeal: [Tigray \(Ethiopia\) - In absence of major international diplomacy and rescue, towards a repeat of the great famine of 1984-1985](#) (3095 signatures)**

**Avaaz petition in 13 languages: [Allow immediate and full humanitarian access and stop starvation in war-affected Tigray](#) (6147 signatures)**

**Contents** - In this newsletter, we especially try to unravel the status of the HUMANITARIAN AID TO TIGRAY.

1. Accessibility according to UN OCHA
2. Accessibility according to the Tigray interim government, appointed by PM Abiy Ahmed
3. Aid distribution according to the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace
4. Dysfunctional aid distribution
5. From the side of the receivers
- 6.
7. Outlook: The Tigray war may lead to another failed harvest in the next season

8. We received the transcript of a second telephone contact with Mulugeta Gebrehiwot (“Chaltu”); as narrated by Alex de Waal (whose earlier call with Mulugeta was recorded), Mulugeta joined the TPLF in 1976 and later became a Senior Fellow of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts University in the USA. At the outbreak of the war he chose to evacuate from Mekelle to one of the remoter woredas. In his recent call, Mulugeta expressed his worries for the coming growing season. Indeed, a cropping season needs to be well prepared. Farmers have modernised a lot over the last decades, they work with fertiliser and selected seed, get advice from the Office of Agriculture. Mulugeta: “If all this is not in place, if people are forced to consume also the grain that is normally conserved as seed, how can they sow in the next cropping season? Will they have oxen for ploughing?” He described what is happening now: “If the marauding army can’t take the stored grain, they pour water on it to make it inedible; they slaughter the oxen and then just take one leg for meat and leave the rest to rot. Farmers are used to work with the Dedebit Microfinance bank; that institution is not operational anymore. Nobody can take loans, they can even not access their own money that is at Dedebit bank.”
9. Mulugeta gives us a further insight in the life in Tigray’s mountains: “I have never seen rural areas mobilized like this. The army left them with only one option: to resist. Away from the towns, the people are creating new administrative structures of their own. Farmers express their hope that the war should be over before *kremti*, otherwise there will be huge famine and starvation next year”.

Kremti is the main rainy season in Tigray, starting in June when all farming activities take place. If the war continues, there will be low inputs on farms during kremti, and this will lead directly to crop failure at the end of the year.

## 1. Accessibility according to UN OCHA

UN OCHA [Tigray region humanitarian update, 12 February 2021](#): “Inside Tigray, more partners have been able to operate along the main road from Alamata to Shire and are working to scaleup their response in Adigrat, Axum, Adwa and Shire, which are currently accessible locations. While very few partners, such as Action Against Hunger and World Vision International, have been able to access small towns off the main road, including Abiy Adi, Hagere Selam and Samre, access to rural areas remains an acute challenge.”

## 2. Accessibility according to the Tigray interim government, appointed by PM Abiy Ahmed

Voice of America Tigrinya, 12 February 2021: Interview of Ms Etenesh Nigussie, head of communication affairs for the “Tigray Interim Administration”, that is the local government appointed by PM Abiy Ahmed. <https://twitter.com/Mattewos88/status/1360733512685547522>

**VoA:** The federal government and the Interim Administration of Tigray are not willing to open a humanitarian corridor for two thirds of Tigray. Why is your administration not willing to open this corridor?

**Etenesh Nigussie (EN):** There are many challenges to transport food aid. For example, lorry drivers are not willing to go to many areas due to security problems. Now, we found some willing lorry drivers and food aid is on the way to the areas in need. However, we still have a security problem. As you know, Eritrean troops are in Tigray and they loot the aid during transportation. So, food aid is not reaching the people in need. This is the main challenge.

**VoA:** Have you ever issued a press release regarding the presence of Eritrean troops and the Amhara militia? Have you ever demanded those forces to pull out from Tigray.

**EN:** Regarding this, we always get questions and we try to give an answer. The Eritrean troops and Amhara militia must pull out from Tigray. The interim administration is doing its best. The presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray is the biggest challenge we have now.

**VoA:** However, OTNAA [an opposition party in Tigray] is asking the interim administration to pressure the federal government to withdraw Eritrean troops and Amhara militias from Tigray, and they alert the international community.

**EN:** That is great. We are working on it and we will continue working on it.

### **3. Aid distribution according to the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace**

On 13 February, the Ministry of Peace of Ethiopia distributed a list of 32 woredas in Tigray where food aid would have been distributed. ( [https://twitter.com/MoP\\_Ethiopia/status/1360493536995659778](https://twitter.com/MoP_Ethiopia/status/1360493536995659778) ) Those who are familiar with the names of the 88 existing woredas and town administrations in Tigray, noted that this list comprises strongly modified names, amharanised names, duplicates, towns and woreda names mixed up. We have reconstituted the MoP list, matched it with actual woredas – except for one woreda name (“Dro”) out of which we really could not make anything.

[In section 5.4.2 of the [Tigray Atlas of the humanitarian situation, v 1.1, on the map](#)], the hatched woredas are those that supposedly received the aid reported by MoP. In most of these woredas, only a part is controlled by the ENDF and its allies, along the roads, and if all went well, one or a few distributions would have taken place in towns along the roads. That does not necessarily mean that most of the aid really reached the intended beneficiaries - see below. Other woredas where aid was dispatched are on the Eritrean border. Further, and particularly south of Adwa-Axum, aid would have been sent to woredas that are totally not under government control; one may presume that it has been diverted somewhere...

Sources used for map preparation – thanks to the dedicated cartographer!



- CSA & BoFED (2020) Ethiopia Administrative Boundary Common Operational Database. New woreda (district) boundaries in use since January 2020. Downloaded from <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/> (Retrieved on February 15, 2021).
- MapsEthiopia (2021) Crisis in Ethiopia. Downloaded from <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1ukq3h-fUshA0a0ZDcSI22WHbfC6PnKtX&ll=14.145975755682336%2C38.54000791222376&z=8> (Retrieved on February 17, 2021)
- Ministry of Peace (MoP) (2021) The government of the FDRE is continuing to deliver aid in the 32 Woredas of Tigray Regional Administration. Downloaded from [https://twitter.com/MoP\\_Ethiopia/status/1360493536995659778?s=20](https://twitter.com/MoP_Ethiopia/status/1360493536995659778?s=20) (Retrieved on February 13, 2021).
- Own interviews with eyewitnesses and UN staff

#### 4. Dysfunctional aid distribution

##### Reminder: dissolution of TDA and REST boards

On 8 February, the Ethiopian government officially dissolved the boards of the two largest local NGOs in Tigray, which are largely trusted by people in the region (see Situation Report [EEPA Horn No. 80](#), 09 February 2021). The Tigray Development Association (TDA) and the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) will now formally be governed by 'a caretaker administrative board'.

##### Functioning of aid distribution

On our request, a senior Tigrayan activist contacted people on the ground and provided this report on the functioning of aid distribution:

“One of the big problems is the absence of structures to reach out the needy. The Relief Society of Tigray (REST) was the main organised institution for this, but REST is now having a lot of problems:

- Its’ management is interim and the board members have been replaced; Amharas are dominating the board now.
- REST’s 33 warehouses in various woredas (7,000 - 10,000 Qt. capacity) are destroyed.
- 11 offices looted.
- 70 trucks and vehicles taken away as part of the overall looting from the region.
- Other Tigray-based NGOs are forced to defame REST.

Having all these problems, REST’s hands are tied.

But, USAID and CRF want to deliver aid through REST, aiming at reaching 1.3 million people.

So, they are trying their best. But internet connection made them incapable to communicate with their foreign partners.

They continue trying to directly deliver aid to the needy, after the consultation of elders and others.

There are logistics problems and people at the interim administration or the military aren't willing to help them.

As there is no stable local administration in the woredas as well, it is hard to deliver aid.

USAID is now forcing the federal government for going themselves down the level of tabyas (sub-districts), as well as woredas far from the main roads to deliver aid.

If REST is having hard time in reaching out to the public with its existing structures, it is almost impossible for others.

“The others, like WFP, are trying to use the interim administration and the elders assigned by them, but the military is intervening in the process, making it impossible to deliver aid. Military vehicles have been requisitioned for aid delivery. The military are taking much of the aid and together with the interim administration boys, they sell it to flour factories, rather than bringing it to the needy.”

“The military have a clear intention, sometimes speak it out loudly, to starve the public to punish them and then to make the TDF surrender.”

### **Witness from within a local NGO**

A staff member of a major local NGO: “With our NGO, we have shifted back from development activities to humanitarian assistance, because Ethiopia is attacking us so badly. Food aid is only provided to towns and villages along the main roads, not to the rural areas. We are responsible for transporting food aid in bulk, but we do not distribute it directly to the beneficiaries. The names of beneficiaries and quantities are decided by others. We have no control, no decision. If somebody wants to be a member of the Prosperity Party (PP), they give him quintals and quintals of grain. The poor get nothing. Those who manage to collect a lot of food aid sell it on the black market later on.”

“We went to bring food aid to a town in a woreda (district) that is fully controlled by the Eritrean army. All the food aid that we brought was taken by the Eritrean soldiers. I was so sad. On that occasion, I discussed with some farmers. They told me that the Eritreans took everything. They took all medicines from the hospital and sent it to their country. Over there, the people are so suffering. People there die from the smallest thing.”

## **5. From the side of the receivers**

Testimonies on aid to the war-affected population, as published in our earlier paper [“What happens with the limited volumes of food aid that are sent to Tigray?”](#)

### **1) Shire**

Notes based on a telephone call: “The initial wheat aid distribution was in December. Distribution was handled by the Ethiopian government, and the aid did not get to all of Shire’s residents. Furthermore, those that were given 7 kg of wheat were required to sign for 15 kg. If they refused to sign for 15 kg

they were denied the 7 kg. It's important to emphasize that there was no electricity. Hence, no way of grinding the grain. During this period, he told me that three young men that were displaced, taking shelter outside the warehouse, were killed after they were accused of stealing wheat, which was impossible as these boys didn't have a place to stay at and no means to prepare the wheat."

"Second week of February, USAID labeled aid trucks have begun to arrive and people have been given 1 liter of cooking oil and 3 kg of split peas, and around 15 kg wheat per person. There is gross shortage of food in Shire! People have to sell all they have at low prices to be able to buy food; folks are literally starving to death."

## 2) IDPs in Shire

There are currently around 80 000 displaced Tigrayans in Shire, spread across three different schools. In January 2021, at Aksum University's Shire Campus, there were more than 40 000 displaced Tigrayans. See the [report on internally displaced persons in Shire](#). The others are in the Shire Preparatory School and the Primary School. Amongst the displaced at Aksum Uni's Shire campus are pregnant women, elderly, children and many sick people needing medical attention. Notes from telephone call: "The wheat aid given to the displaced was 15 kg for each. The staff handed out wheat until 6 PM, until their workday was done. The next day as folks lined up early in the morning they told them the wheat was stolen and used that excuse to not give more wheat. He says that there is ample evidence that all the remaining wheat was transported to Eritrea by the Eritrean soldiers."

"In January, the same aid people arrived in Shire. This time they were handing 30 kg wheat grains per person, only to the IDPs and none to the residents of the town. The IDPs were told the 30 kg wheat was to last for next two months and to not expect any more for these next two months."

## 3) Addi Da'iro

Notes from telephone call: "Residents were denied food aid after the town's inhabitants refused to appoint PP officials as administrators. The residents demanded the evacuation of Eritrean soldiers instead."

## 4) Aksum

"I heard there has been food aid of 15 kilogram of grain per family, and only once. Neither I, nor my relatives have received aid. I am not so sure about how many families received that 15 kilogram of food aid. How many days would that last? Who takes the rest? Of course, the Eritreans?"

## 5) Adwa

"Last time, they made us sign 15 kg while giving only 7 kg".

## 6) Adigrat

“They registered us four times saying they will give aid but none was given. We think that the people who register us are taking the grain for themselves and resell it.”

7) Irob

A witness, from Irob woreda (extreme northeast of Tigray) mentioned to Associated Press that Ethiopian authorities are withholding food aid from families suspected of links to Tigray fighters: “If you don’t bring your father, your brothers, you don’t get the aid, you’ll starve” (Associated Press, 12 February 2021: [‘We’ll be left without families’: Fear in Ethiopia’s Tigray](#)).

8) Hagere Selam

“Mostly transport to and from Mekelle is possible. The road is closed from time to time when battles occur in nearby areas. Here, food aid distribution has started, 25 kilogram of grain per person. But it has been interrupted; I don’t know the reason. The aid was brought by the Relief Society of Tigray. It was distributed by the appointed district administrator, under supervision of the army. The new administrator is not dedicated at all, he is afraid of the situation. People do not like him because he works with the soldiers.” He stresses: “The administrator is not good, we do not like him; we are waiting for *Woyane* to come back.” *Woyane* is a generic name for Tigray resistance and the Tigray government.

9) Addishuhu (Imba Alaje woreda)

“They distributed 15 kilogrammes of grain per person, only once, and no oil and beans.”

10) Yechila

“They only distributed 15 kg of grain per person in Yechilla, no oil and beans. All other places in Abergele woreda didn’t get any aid.”

11) Mekelle

“Some people that I know received food aid and they only got 8 kg of wheat and expired corn flour, the so-called *fafa*.”

12) Rural areas, away from the road

Largely: no information from rural dwellers, there is no network. Several urban people told us: food aid only comes to towns and large villages along the main roads, in minimal amounts; they do not bring it to the rural areas, and they do not call the people from the rural areas to collect it in town.

Mekelle business community: “there is no humanitarian access outside Mekelle, civilians being killed... why should those so called elders and religious leaders from Addis appear in Mekelle? Tigray is not only Mekelle.” <https://www.facebook.com/100015400635251/videos/1036591710197507/>

## 6. Outlook: The Tigray war may lead to another failed harvest in the next season

We received the transcript of a second telephone contact with Mulugeta Gebrehiwot (“Chaltu”); as narrated by Alex de Waal (whose [earlier call with Mulugeta was recorded](#)), Mulugeta joined the TPLF in 1976 and later became a Senior Fellow of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts University in the USA. At the outbreak of the war he chose to evacuate from Mekelle to one of the remoter woredas. In his recent call, Mulugeta expressed his worries for the coming growing season. Indeed, a cropping season needs to be well prepared. Farmers have modernised a lot over the last decades, they work with fertiliser and selected seed, get advice from the Office of Agriculture. Mulugeta: “If all this is not in place, if people are forced to consume also the grain that is normally conserved as seed, how can they sow in the next cropping season? Will they have oxen for ploughing?” He described what is happening now: “If the marauding army can’t take the stored grain, they pour water on it to make it inedible; they slaughter the oxen and then just take one leg for meat and leave the rest to rot. Farmers are used to work with the Dede-bit Microfinance bank; that institution is not operational anymore. Nobody can take loans, they can even not access their own money that is at Dede-bit bank.”

Mulugeta gives us a further insight in the life in Tigray’s mountains: “I have never seen rural areas mobilized like this. The army left them with only one option: to resist. Away from the towns, the people are creating new administrative structures of their own. Farmers express their hope that the war should be over before *kremti*, otherwise there will be huge famine and starvation next year”.

*Kremti* is the main rainy season in Tigray, starting in June when all farming activities take place. If the war continues, there will be low inputs on farms during *kremti*, and this will lead directly to crop failure at the end of the year.

## 7. In the media

- Radio France International, 10 February 2021. [Ethiopian Red Cross says 80 percent of Tigray cut off from aid](#)
- Today News Africa, 10 February 2021. [Human Rights Watch concludes Abiy Ahmeds soldiers bombed civilians to death, schools, hospitals and markets in Tigray region.](#)
- The Conversation, 10 February 2021. [The legal implications of humanitarian aid blockades](#)
- Le Vif, 10 February 2021. [Ethiopie: une sale guerre à huis clos](#) [In French, [English translation available](#)]
- Associated Press, 11 February 2021: [‘We’ll be left without families’: Fear in Ethiopia’s Tigray](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 11 February 2021: [Relief for Tigray stalled as Ethiopian government curbs access](#)
- Addis Standard, 11 February 2021. [Ethiopian Rights Commission’s latest report on Tigray sheds light on sexual violence, child casualties.](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 11 February 2021. [Ethiopia: Unlawful Shelling of Tigray Urban Areas](#)
- Foreign Lobby, 11 February 2021. [Ethiopia hires lobbying help amid dual threats from Egypt, human rights critics](#)

- Libération, 11 February 2021. Ethiopie : au Tigré, une guerre invisible. [In French, [English translation available](#)]
- Los Angeles Times, 11 February 2021. [A rape survivor's story emerges from a remote African war](#). Reporter Lucy Kassa has been [intimidated by Ethiopia's secret services](#) as a consequence of this article.
- L'Avvenire, 14 February 2021. [Ecco i massacri nel Tigray. Testimoni: preti e civili orrendamente trucidati](#) [In Italian, [English translation available](#)]
- Nation (Kenya), 14 February 2021. ['Scores killed' in anti-government protests in Tigray](#)
- BBC, 15 February 2021. [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: 'I lost my hand when a soldier tried to rape me'](#)
- The Times, 16 February 2021. [Ancient monastery 'looted and bombed' in Ethiopia](#).
- Knack, 17 February 2021. [Oorlog om Tigray: Vlaamse prof ziet levenswerk bedreigd](#) [In Dutch, [English translation available](#)]
- Luzerner Zeitung, 18 February 2021. [Krieg in Tigray: «Der einzige Unterschied zum Völkermord in Ruanda ist die Zahl der Toten»](#). [In German, [English translation available](#)]
- Associated Press, 18 February 2021: ['Horrible': Witnesses recall massacre in Ethiopian holy city](#)
- The Telegraph, 19 February 2021: ['You should have finished off the survivors': Ethiopian army implicated in brutal war crime video](#)
- Associated Press, 19 February 2021: [US: Aid pause to Ethiopia no longer linked to dam dispute](#)

## 8. Opinion pieces

- Saba of Axsum: [A "Feminist" Government: And It's Repulsive Rape Cover-ups](#)
- Mistir Sew: [The looming famine in Tigray](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Ireland must speak up for the starving in Tigray](#)
- Jan Nyssen: [Catastrophe stalks Tigray, again](#)
- Michael Rubin: [Abiy Ahmed: The First Nobel Laureate On Trial at the International Criminal Court?](#)

## **Digest 16. Amnesty International and media articles about the massacres == The mood among soldiers and population (3 March 2021)**

Worldwide awareness of Tigray's plight is growing. Yet, the situation still gets worse... not least because of the consequences of farmers having to eat what otherwise should have been the seeds for the next cropping season. On 28 February, [UN OCHA stated diplomatically](#): "Despite large amounts of food aid reportedly dispatched across Tigray, better monitoring is needed to ensure that aid is reaching those most in need."

### **Contents**

- 16 – 1. 24 hours for Tigray on 9 and 10 March
- 16 – 2. Reminder: the Tigray petition on Avaaz
- 16 – 3. Amnesty and media reports on the massacres in Tigray
- 16 – 4. Ethiopian mood in relation to the reality of the Tigray war
- 16 – 5. Media
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### **1. 24 HOURS FOR TIGRAY ON 9 AND 10 MARCH**

A global coalition of Tigrayan organisations and individuals hosts a 24 hour lobby to highlight the growing humanitarian crisis in Tigray, Ethiopia.

<https://www.24hours-for-tigray.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/24HoursforTigray/>



## 2. REMINDER: THE TIGRAY PETITION ON AVAAZ



Sharing with your personal network is very important for an effective result. You can do so through Facebook or Twitter after signing.

[ENGLISH](#) [العربية](#) [DEUTSCH](#) [РУССКИЙ](#) [FRANÇAIS](#) [ESPAÑOL](#) [PORTUGUÊS](#) [BAHASA](#)  
[INDONESIA](#) [NEDERLANDS](#) [ITALIANO](#) [עברית](#) [TÜRKÇE](#) [POLSKI](#) [ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ](#)

## 3. MASSACRES

Over the last week there has been reporting by Amnesty international and different media channels about massacres in Tigray.

- US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield at the UNSC, 1<sup>st</sup> March: [remarks at a press conference on the March programme of work for the UNSC](#)
- Politico, 28 February: [U.S. is 'gravely concerned' by reports of abuses in Ethiopia](#)

### Aksum

- USNews, 27 February: [Amnesty Report Describes Axum Massacre in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Der Spiegel, 26 February 2021: [Massaker von Aksum - »Sie erschossen meine Nachbarin. Neben ihren Kindern. Einfach so«](#) [in German]. [English translation](#)
- Related or not, a few days earlier, Daniel Kibret, an extreme-right ideologue of PP and EOTC [launched a call for a rapid attack on Aksum](#).

### Maryam Dengelat

- CNN, 27 February 2021: article [Massacre in the mountains](#) and [CNN TV report](#)
- The Economist, 27 February: [Murder in the mountains - Soldiers have killed hundreds of civilians in Tigray](#)

### Gijet and Samre

- The [Ethiopian army has used cluster bombs](#), which again amounts to war crimes.



## Adi Mendi and Debre Harmaz in Central Tigray

- VICE, 27 February: ["They Started Burning the Homes": Ethiopians Say Their Towns Are Being Razed In Ethnic Cleansing Campaign](#)

### Potential for new massacres in roadside villages

Two sources informed that both ENDF and Eritrean soldiers establish camps in villages along the main roads. People are then forced to leave part of the homesteads and must stay in other houses in the village. The soldiers steal from all houses. But, especially, they prevent the people from leaving their village, they want to use them as **human shields** in case TDF would attack. In Adigrat, one source explained that Eritrean soldiers now come to people's houses dropping their military attire and taking clothes from the household, telling people that they will have to say that they are from the family or they live with them.

As part of an upcoming **Atlas of the Humanitarian situation in Tigray**, we have published a [Map of civilian victims in the Tigray war](#) – text is also translated in [Italian language](#)

## 4. ETHIOPIAN MOOD IN RELATION TO THE REALITY OF THE TIGRAY WAR

Many ENDF **soldiers are very young**, as seen from images of prisoners of war (PoW) taken by the Tigray forces ( <https://twitter.com/MapEthiopia/status/1362819099533840386> ). More graphic videos after battles have emerged also, with dozens of similarly young soldiers killed. These young soldiers get mobilised and rapidly sent to the front, seemingly believing the government's story that all is peaceful, and that they just have "some patrolling to do".

The amazing story of this group of PoW goes on. After some time, they were released by the Tigray forces, yet had to walk back to Mekelle. Unarmed, the boys reached the outskirts of Mekelle on foot. [In a video, we see Mekelle residents advising them to hide in their houses](#) and put civilian clothes; within seconds, confidence gets installed and the PoW happily accept the advice, in the same time deserting from the ENDF.

Also, in **Raya Azebo, a deserter of ENDF** shared this story with one of our witnesses on the ground: "I have been captured and released twice by *woyane*. The first time we went fighting in the war front with 2000 soldiers, about 10 of us were captured and the rest was killed. We were released after a few days of education; after release, ENDF forced me to join another battalion; then I was again captured by the local militia with another soldier, the rest of the

battalion was killed or some escaped. They released us again. Now I am hiding in a small town and hope to get civilian clothing so that I can move to my place of origin.”

In view of the above situation, we thought that after they heard about Somalian mothers protesting, mothers in Ethiopia must also have started asking about their children. We have telephoned left and right in order to sense the Ethiopian mood in relation to the reality of the Tigray war. It has been a difficult task, but here are some statements, deemed representative.

#### **a. Reactions within universities**

**Mekelle University (MU)** has started working, mainly graduating students who were near to conclusion. Students have travelled from farther areas, approximately unaware of the real situation in Mekelle and surroundings. Mid February, six [students of Mekelle University have also been killed](#) after their bus ran in an ambush on the way to Addis Ababa.

**Many staff at MU** seem to be unhappy to contact their former friends, students and colleagues at other universities. The water is too deep.

**MU student, from Dire Dawa:** "I will be in Mekelle in the coming days, I am late only because my mom was sick. I guess more than half of the students I know have not gone to MU. I called the friends who are there already, they doubt if it would be possible to finish the academic year."

**MU student, from Mertule-Mariam (Amhara Region):** "Its been three weeks since I am here in Mekelle. The number of students in campus is more than I expected. At first we thought only few students would come. We freely move in town until curfew time, and all the time in campus. Since we came here there was one occasion we heard some gunfire. That is still not a big deal though."

**MU student, Tigrayan:** "We have started class. There is no communication between the Tigrayan and other Ethiopian students. If we talk for a minute, we almost fight. They say to have enjoyed what is happening, and its their pleasure to see ENDF soldiers (unlike us). They seem to show pleasure hearing loud gun fire." She did not want to connect us with those students: "We no longer talk to our friends and classmates from other parts of Ethiopia".

**An academic staff at Gondar University (Amhara Region):** "I can classify our university staff into three groups, with regard to Tigray: (1) Animosity still animates a large part of the staff; (2) Those who lack information. Most people only listen to the state media. I now see that many are understanding the ground situation after one or two months. This takes time

because of misinformation and a tendency not to listen or internalize the pain; and (3) staff of Tigrayan origin and a few others who are sympathetic to Tigray.

#### **b. Reactions from Addis Ababa**

An international academic, with much research experience in Ethiopia: “I am very concerned about how things will develop the coming years in Ethiopia. When I zoom with people in Addis it’s like nothing is going on up in the north. They will deny or say that it is well deserved”.

A women researcher, in her late 30s, mixed Oromo and Amhara origin. Inflation and the price of things is on her mind. But she spontaneously says that what the government tells about Tigray is not true and it cannot be believed. She talks frequently with her Tigrayan colleague who has seen the situation in Tigray. Hence, she may know more than many people. In our office there are others who don't think that it's OK, what happens there. Oromia is very unsettled, and divided between those supporting Jawar Mohammed and his friends in jail and those supporting Abiy Ahmed. She said people are shifting sides all the times as well...

A long-term foreign resident in Addis Ababa: “I noticed that every group is talking almost exclusively about “their own issue” for the moment, with very few people commenting on the overall situation in the country. Oromo talk about the hunger strike by Jawar and others; Amhara on the Sudanese army in Al-Fashaqa; Southern Nations about the planned division of their region. People talk only about the issue which concerns their group, while being rather reluctant to talk with foreigners about the situation in Tigray.”

The Amnesty International report has been noticed even by people who have tended to ‘shield themselves’ from the news - and this, before the government reaction. Some people who until then preferred not to talk about the war in Tigray stated that this was terrible, and Ethiopia was “returning to days of savagery”.

A foreign observer in Addis Ababa states: “Many Addis Ababa residents don’t believe government propaganda but keep silent because of the high level of general suspicion. Monitoring of neighbours by neighbours, that people long blamed on the TPLF, is still in place. Politics is not talked about, except behind closed doors or in conventional and agreed terms. There is, however, a strong feeling of defiance towards Abiy Ahmed. For Oromo nationalists, he failed to achieve true autonomy and is responsible for Jawar’s and Bekele’s jailing. For Amhara nationalists, he’s only a temporary ally, before the issue of the annexation of parts of Tigray brings Amhara nationalists and the federal government at war against each other.”

## 5. MEDIA

The government has 'granted access' to seven international media houses (Reuters, AFP, New York Times, BBC, al-Jazeera, France 24 and the Financial Times). However, threatening statements, harassing and arrests of journalists' 'fixers' and translators, and the arrest of the [BBC's reporter in Tigray](#) suggest that this move goes [hand in hand with repression \(as stated by Martin Plaut\)](#).

- VoA, 19 February 2021: [Clandestine Training of Somali Forces in Eritrea Stirs Families' Concern](#)
- Svenska Yle, 20 February 2021: [Two million people are at risk of starvation in the space of a few weeks in Tigray](#) – at the same time aid workers are still being denied access. Original in [Swedish](#) language.
- Associated Press, 20 February 2021: [UN says malnutrition 'very critical' in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Radio France International, 20 February 2021: [Conflit au Tigré: la présidente éthiopienne Sahle-Work Zewde sort de son silence](#) [in French]
- BBC, 21 February 2021: [Tigray crisis: 'Overwhelming' humanitarian needs in Ethiopia's region](#)
- France Inter, 22 February: [Massacres behind closed doors in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#). Original in [French language](#)
- Fana BC, 22 February 2021: [Ethiopian army chief on working visit to UAE](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 22 February 2021: [Abiy purged his military high command to prepare for his war against the TPLF](#)
- Devex, 23 February 2021: [EU envoy says Ethiopia in 'denial' over Tigray](#)
- Euractiv, 23 February 2021: [EU envoy warns Ethiopia Tigray crisis 'out of control'](#)
- Trouw, 24 February 2021: [Ethiopië verliest regie over Tigray waar gemoord, geplunderd en verkracht wordt](#) [in Dutch] – [English summary](#) by tghat.com
- AFP, 25 February 2021: [Tigray official slams damage by troops from 'neighbouring' country](#)
- Le Monde, 25 February 2021: [En Ethiopie, la revanche nationaliste des Amhara](#) [in French]
- Reuters, 25 February 2021: [Hundreds of buildings burned around Tigray town, research group says](#)
- Addis Standard, 26 February 2021: Tigray Region Head of the ruling Prosperity Party said "ruthless individuals and groups are trying to supply wrong information to media crew that has set feet in Tigray" and warned "appropriate measures would be taken." ( <https://twitter.com/addisstandard/status/1365329074143526914> )
- Fana BC, 26 February 2021: [Ethiopian army, Eritrea and Amhara forces destroyed Tigray's 30-year development, says interim official](#), also [published in Italian language](#)
- Church Times, 26 February 2021: [Archbishop Makgoba warns of genocide after more attacks in Ethiopia](#)
- AFP, 26 February 2021: ['Blanket of sadness' covers conflict-hit Tigray capital](#)

- New York Times, 26 February: [Ethiopia's War Leads to Ethnic Cleansing in Tigray Region, U.S. Report Says](#) – Similar article in [Today News Africa](#)
- The Nation (Kenya), 27 February 2021: [My lucky escape from Tigray to Kenya](#)
- ARD Das Erste, 28 February 2021: [Sudan: Hoffen auf Hilfe](#) [TV report in German]
- Le Soir, 1 March 2021: [Ethiopie: Amnesty dénonce des massacres dans la province rebelle du Tigré](#) [in French]
- BBC, 1 March 2021: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: BBC reporter Girmay Gebru detained by military](#)
- Al Jazeera, 1 March 2021: [Trauma, anger as Tigrayans recount Eritrea troops' 'grave crimes'](#)
- CNN, 1 March 2021: [Leader of Tigray's forces accuses Ethiopian and Eritrean governments of genocide](#)

## 6. OPINION PIECES

- Eritrean women speak out: [Rape and sexual violence by Eritrean troops in Tigray – “not in our name”](#)
- Alex De Waal: [We Can No Longer Deny the Atrocities in Ethiopia](#)
- Rep. Ilhan Omar: [Statement on the Situation in Ethiopia](#)
- Fisaha Tesfay, Hailay Gesesew: [The health crisis in Ethiopia's war-ravaged Tigray](#)
- Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation: [Don't let Covid-19 allow us to overlook genocide](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll and Alex De Waal: [New war and hunger in Ethiopia: What will Norway do in the Security Council?](#) (Translated from [Norwegian](#))
- Kjetil Tronvoll: Twitter thread about [the genocidal war on Tigray](#), also posted [in Italian language](#)
- Jake Wallis Simons: [When black lives don't seem to matter](#)
- Alex De Waal: [The Horn: Risks of Starvation Rise in Ethiopia's Tigray War](#)
- Karla Ayivi: [Conflit au Tigré : Risque d'impunité des crimes internationaux commis](#). [in French]

## **Digest 17.       Published: “Tigray: Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation” (11 March 2021)**

As a signatory of the [appeal for Tigray by concerned scientists and development professionals](#), we send you our weekly update. This week the update is short, because we worked mainly to prepare the Atlas of the humanitarian situation.

### **Contents**

- 17 – 1. War in Tigray: Summary of Main Events
- 17 – 2. Atlas of the humanitarian situation
- 17 – 3. Some presentations by scientists at the 24 hours for Tigray:
- 17 – 4. Upcoming: Spotlight on the Tigray Region of Ethiopia: The Need for an Urgent Response
- 17 – 5. In the media
- 17 – 6. Opinion

### **1. War in Tigray: Summary of Main Events**

To update yourself, see this summary by EEPA: [War in Tigray: Summary of Main Events](#) (10 March 2021)

### **2. Atlas of the humanitarian situation**

At Ghent University, we have prepared an atlas to document and map the situation in which approximately 6 million Tigrayans currently find themselves. The nineteen conventional maps in our atlas and the data layers in the interactive Web Application provide detailed background information related to administrative divisions, social and natural resources, and give an overview of locations of internally displaced people, massacres and civilian casualties. Humanitarian access and needs are mapped also, based on official data on humanitarian aid distribution. The final outlook in the atlas forewarns that a continuation of the Tigray war may lead to another failed harvest in the next growing season as most farmers will need safe access to their farming fields, already by the month of April.

**This is the atlas:** Annys, S., Vanden Bempt, T., Negash, E., De Sloover, L., Nyssen, J., 2021. Tigray: atlas of the humanitarian situation. Journal of Maps, preprint.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181\\_Tigray\\_Atlas\\_of\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_situation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181_Tigray_Atlas_of_the_humanitarian_situation)

**Link to Web Application:** <https://arcgis.vmbWHO>

### **3. Some presentations by scientists at the 24 hours for Tigray:**

- Kjetil Tronvoll: <https://twitter.com/24hrsforTigray/status/1369528577683845121>
- Seppe Deckers: <https://twitter.com/24hrsforTigray/status/1369453024427524104>

- Patrick Heinisch
- Jan Nyssen: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349948564>
- Sofie Annys: <https://www.facebook.com/emnet.negash/posts/2210872599048890>
- Full video: <https://www.facebook.com/103456238424772/videos/466971417668773>

#### 4. Upcoming: Spotlight on the Tigray Region of Ethiopia: The Need for an Urgent Response

Webinar organised by Lord Alton of Liverpool and the Coalition for Genocide Response. Speakers include [David Alton](#), [Alex de Waal](#), [Martin Plaut](#), [Jan Nyssen](#), ...

16 March 2021, 17:00 - 18:00 PM CET, zoom. [Please register here: https://spotlightontigray.eventbrite.co.uk](https://spotlightontigray.eventbrite.co.uk)

#### 5. In the media

- Associated Press, 10 March 2021: [Ethiopia diplomat quits US post, cites atrocities in Tigray](#)
- ICRC, 10 March 2021: [ICRC and ERCS deliver emergency relief to people affected by the fighting in Tigray](#)
- Eritrea Hub, 10 March 2021: [Eritrean Christians Seek Forgiveness from their counterparts in Tigray](#)
- Fana BC, 10 March 2021: [Ethiopian Ambassador meets with Head of Intl affairs of Ministry of Armed Forces of France](#)
- EUobserver, 9 March 2021: [Ethiopia: Time to tell the truth, Ambassador](#)
- The Guardian, 8 March 2021: [Young men take up arms in northern Ethiopia as atrocities fuel insurgency](#)
- BBC, 7 March 2021: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: 'We're the government and we know what you're doing'](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 6 March 2021. [Anger and collective trauma scar Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 5 March 2021: [Ethiopia: Eritrean Forces Massacre Tigray Civilians](#)
- EurAsia Review, 5 March 2021: [Humanitarian Situation Going From Bad To Worse In Horn Of Africa – Analysis](#)
- Aljazeera, 5 March 2021: [UN alleges war crimes in Ethiopia's Tigray, urges Eritrea exit](#)
- Le Monde, 3 March 2021. [En Ethiopie, un climat de tension pèse sur les médias après les arrestations de journalistes au Tigré](#). [in French]

#### 6. Opinion

- Will Brown, Judd Devermont: [The U.N. Must End the Horrors of Ethiopia's Tigray War](#)
- Paulos Tesfagiorgis: [The un-civil war in Ethiopia: an Eritrean perspective](#)

- [Joint NGO Letter to H.E. Ms. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Permanent Representative of the US to the UN in New York, on the crisis in Ethiopia](#)
- Washington Post Editorial Board: [A key U.S. ally in Africa is massacring civilians. Can Biden stop it?](#)



## Digest 18. **Abiy Ahmed launches a “final notice” and warns for more destruction in Tigray (20 March 2021)**

This update addresses the announced Human Rights mission to Tigray (section 1), the dire health situation (section 2), the situation of education and the re-appearance of Prof. Kindeya (section 3), the support to Tigrayan students abroad (section 4), some news from Western Tigray (section 5) and Amhara region (section 6), interesting media reports and opinion pieces (sections 7 and 8).

LATEST NEWS! Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed published a sinister communiqué (“Final notice”) on 19 March, related to the war in Tigray (<https://twitter.com/EthiopiaEU/status/1372893773324247044>). It ends with these words: “The government calls on these [TPLF] leaders to do their part by learning from the devastation and damage so far, presenting themselves to justice, preventing further national loss and not shedding the blood of citizens in vain. TPLF’s top military and political leaders who do this will save themselves from severe punishment and prevent misery of their people.” Every Tigrayan reads this as a threatening omen of what may come (e.g. <https://twitter.com/GlobalGsts/status/1373099281838641154>).

### 1. Investigating crimes against humanity

The Ethiopian Government has given [official permission to investigators from the UN Office for Human Rights to travel to Tigray](#) and investigate human rights abuses and crimes in the region (together with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission). The decision comes lately, and under immense international pressure. A first team of UN Human Rights Monitors will deploy to Mekelle very soon – including their own Tigrinya speaking investigators. Hopefully, like the international journalists recently allowed to enter Tigray, the OHCHR will manage to investigate independently. Our [Atlas of the humanitarian situation](#) has been updated and, though the widespread traumatic gender-based violence occurrences have not yet been mapped, there is a map representing the 94 known massacres that have occurred so far in the Tigray war. And just while writing reports come in from numerous civilians massacred in villages around Samre. There is work for the OHCHR!

Related news:

- Channel 4 News, 18 March: [The Horrors of the Hidden War: Inside the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia](#) - How women, again and again, bear the brunt...
- Sky News, 17 March: [Ethiopia: Hundreds executed, thousands homeless - the human cost of fighting in Tigray](#) – This is in line with our earlier report concerning the burning of hundreds of homesteads in the Gijet area (and concomitant killings): [Cluster bombing on Tigray by the Ethiopian army - more than 500 homesteads destroyed in Gijet](#)
- The German television chain ZDF brought a report covering areas between Mekelle, Aksum and Shire, with witnesses speaking about killings, rape, and the Aksum massacre: <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/zdf-mittagsmagazin/zdf-mittagsmagazin-vom-16-maerz-2021-100.html> (from minute 22:09) [in German] Occasionally, in the report, Eritrean troop transports are visible.

- AFP, 16 March: ['The fighting continues': A Tigray town reels from drawn-out war](#) (relates the situation in Wuqro and Agula'i)
- Le Monde, 11 March: [Les Etats-Unis dénoncent des « actes de nettoyage ethnique » au Tigré](#) [in French]
- France24, 10 March: [Ethiopia: video of Tigray massacre lifts lid on 'war without photos'](#)
- Mistir Sew: [Ethiopian government cannot investigate their own crimes in Tigray](#)
- Various [government outlets now openly admit heavy rape](#) as a widespread phenomenon, but still try to divert responsibility by "blame-game". Referring back to our [earlier report on president Sahlework visiting the rape victims](#), we recently learned from a close witness that she kept asking the victims: "did these men speak Tigrinya?"

## 2. Public health

In a [press release on 15 March, Médecins sans Frontières](#), mentions that

- Violence in Ethiopia's Tigray region has extended to attacks on **health facilities**, with barely **one in 10 functioning**.
- Of the 106 health facilities MSF teams visited, one in five had been or was occupied by armed soldiers; one facility is being used as an army base.
- The looted, vandalised facilities and resulting lack of medical staff means people in the region have very little access to healthcare. [MSF Head said malicious intent was evident](#), the damage intended to make sure no one could use the facilities afterwards.
- MSF urges all armed groups in the area to respect medical facilities and for services to be restored as soon as possible.

The MSF report holds numerous photos, including that of a [graffiti realised by Ethiopian soldiers](#) in the destroyed Debre Abay health centre. It reads: "Fuck you the people of Tigray: now we have handed you over to *sha'ibiya* [the Eritrean regime] and they will roast you".

Other NGO people who were in Tigray last week confirm the MSF report for the facilities they saw in Eastern Tigray. Besides, most agro-input shops have been vandalised too..."

Related news:

- UN News, 19 March: [Tigray crisis: Children must be protected from harm, urges UNICEF](#)
- Norwegian Refugee Council, 18 March: [Hunger and disease rife among displaced as aid workers gain access to new parts of Tigray](#)

- UNHCR and the NGOs have returned to the two remaining refugee camps in Tigray in the course of the last month.
- BBC, 16 March: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: Hospitals 'vandalised and looted'](#)
- Der Spiegel, 15 March: [An Ethiopian Doctor Records the Destruction of His Homeland](#) – (also [in German language](#))

### 3. University and education

We continue updating the [situation of the four Tigrayan universities](#) in our status report. Important news is that Prof. Kindeya Gebrehiwot, previous president of MU, who was evicted from his position by the Ethiopian government late October 2020, has recently posted several messages on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ProfKindeya>). Reportedly, as he was on the authorities' search list (for sake of his position in the TPLF party), Kindeya retreated to the mountains. He now managed to find internet connection and to send out several tweets – in the first place, I am so relieved that he is alive!

The Ethiopian Ministry of Peace claims that, on 8 March, 1000 Tigrayan 12<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in the national exams in Tigray. ([https://twitter.com/MoP\\_Ethiopia/status/1371162367715860480/photo/1](https://twitter.com/MoP_Ethiopia/status/1371162367715860480/photo/1)) However, a month earlier, [it was stated that about 12,000 students were expected](#) to take these exams, physically in Mekelle, Adigrat, Aksum and Raya universities. Our contacts in Mekelle doubt very much even about this number of 1000 participants. On that day, the Tigrayan students that could be reached were ordered to go to Kwiha to participate in the exam. When reaching the town they saw that the school where the exam was to be taken was surrounded by heavily armed soldiers. Most students feared that a bad thing could happen (such as forced recruitment to the army) and they went back to Mekelle without taking the exam.

Primary and secondary schools in Tigray have not yet resumed classes.

### 4. Supporting the Tigrayan students abroad

I have received this message from one of the many committed Tigrayan students abroad:

“In the wake of the ongoing crisis in Tigray, significant trauma is being dealt by students in higher education who have family in Tigray, Ethiopia. This, in addition to an already isolating experience of graduate school amid the COVID-19 pandemic has a big toll on the physical, psychological and spiritual health of students.

I wanted to reach out to you to distribute this form in your network <http://bit.ly/3tmEwzI> designed to assess the current needs and hopefully organize virtual dialogue to support graduate students through this time of distress.

Thank you for your persistent advocacy to end the suffering of our people in Tigray!"

The message is in the first place addressed to Tigrayan students abroad. I do hope that all readers realise their immense suffering, not only when hearing about relatives killed and wounded, but also the numerous (filmed) massacres, the huge suffering of raped women (only those who suspect pregnancy or have suffered severe injuries will report to hospital!), the fact of being targeted as a nation, including the agricultural base, the infrastructure and the spiritual centre Aksum. The above initiative will for sure enhance self-help groups among Tigrayans, but I think it is as important to strengthen ties between the numerous international supporters and the Tigrayan community abroad.

## **5. News from the Western Tigray**

In many places in Tigray, tens of thousands of internal refugees are arriving from Western Tigray, like confirming the notion of "ethnic cleansing" of Tigrayans that is happening there. Some contacts in Western Tigray mention indeed that remaining Tigrayans are fleeing; the provisional Amhara administration writes "laissez-passer" letters for them, in order to travel to the other side of the Tekeze. *Fanno* youth groups looted almost everything from harvests to generators to water pumps to health facilities. Remaining Welqaytés considering themselves Amharas or declared Amharas by the new authorities, are yet upset against the Amhara region's administration. Some said, about the lootings: "What did the TPLF do worse than this?". Some new administrators have Tigrayan names, speak more Tigrinya than Amharic and have the Tigrayan traditional scarifications on their temples... Some people who barely understand Amharic now claim their "Amharaness" as Welqaytés. "Tigrayan" there refers mainly to the people who were resettled in the lowlands over the last 30 years, according to the new nomenclature introduced by Amhara leaders. Eritrean soldiers are very active in Humera where they hold regular meetings with the provisional Amhara administration.

Prof. [Wolbert Smidt](#) has carried out ethnohistorical research in Western Tigray and mentions that "Welqayté are usually Tigrinya-speakers, today and also according to older historical sources, and belong to the cluster of several old autonomous Tigrinya-speaking provinces which were characteristic for the historical north."

We do not have contacts in May Kadra, but a witness travelled through the town: "in the middle of the town, where a full block of houses has been burnt to the ground, they left on the road all the furnitures, broken things, pieces of corrugated iron and so on. They did not clean anything, as if they wanted to show the scars of war to anybody passing by. May Kadra is the symbol they were waiting for." No names of the Amhara victims have been confirmed, including by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which was on the scene. The last word has not yet been said about May Kadra, there are very different versions to what is in the first Amnesty report. It's one of 94 known massacres so far. "The government directly engaged in a PR campaign about one massacre without clear investigation, and neglecting all other massacres in Tigray".

We learnt also that the new Amhara administration plans a land distribution in the conquered Western Tigray.

## 6. Meanwhile in Amhara Region

It is interesting to follow up what happens in Eritrea and Amhara Region. Both have their armed forces actively involved in the Tigray war. From Eritrean side, there is growing concern of civil society, both in diaspora and inside the country. 491 Eritrean women have written an open letter [“Not in my name”](#) to oppose the rape culture of the Eritrean army. Eritrean Church leaders have recommended their followers [not to buy looted goods](#) from Tigray, and [Christians asked forgiveness](#) for the war crimes by Eritrean soldiers.

We do not see such clearly expressed opinions from Amhara side (even not in the diaspora), and it worries. Hence we telephoned to some contacts in Gondar and Soqota, to learn more.

In Gondar, people genuinely think the war is over. The main daily problem is inflation. Prices of absolutely everything are skyrocketing. 120 birr for a litre of oil, if available. Queues for gasoil are one kilometre long. People are really angry about the huge inflation. But, they just don't know about the war crimes in Tigray. Common people only have access to government propaganda. When travellers coming from Tigray tell what they've seen there, the others are shocked in disbelief. “You have no idea of the strength of media propaganda.” Many people find it more comfortable to believe the government talk. And there is a very vocal minority of young Amhara male activists, who enjoy war crimes against Tigrayans. The problem is that they are the only ones we hear.

In Soqota, the talk of the town is the occupation of the rural market place Tsata by the Tigray forces on 18 March. Tsata is part of Amhara region, some 20 km east of Soqota. There are fears that the local Agaw people may cooperate with the Tigrayans, and the Waghimra Zone (to which Soqota and Tsata belong) issued a communiqué inviting the population not to side with the rebels and mentioning that Soqota is not at risk. For the rest, same worries as in Gondar for inflation, but people clearly link it up with ongoing warfare.

## 7. Other news

- New York Times, 19 March: [Fear and Hostility Simmer as Ethiopia’s Military Keeps Hold on Tigray](#)
- Associated Press, 19 March: [Ethiopian leader warns fugitive Tigray leaders to surrender](#)
- Washington Post, 19 March: A border war looms between Sudan and Ethiopia as Tigray conflict sends ripples through region
- CNN, 19 March: [‘Practically this has been a genocide’. Doctors say rape is being used as a weapon of war in Ethiopia’s conflict](#)
- Foreign Policy, 18 March: [Biden Dispatches Senate Ally to Ethiopia to Address Crisis - Chris Coons to deliver a tough message to Abiy Ahmed](#)
- Channel 4 News, 18 March: [Refugee exodus on Sudan-Ethiopia border as women report mass rape and torture in Ethiopia’s Tigray Province](#)

- Channel 4 News, 18 March: [Nobel peace prize of Ethiopian Prime Minister questioned amid conflict in Tigray Province of country](#)
- Voice of America (Tigrigna), 17 March: [ቢሮ ኮሚኒቴሽን ክልል ትግራይ 700 ሺሕ ነበረቲ ካብ ም/ትግራይ ተመዝቢሎም ይብል መንግስቲ ክልል ኣምሓራ ግን ነዚ ይነጽግ](#) [In Tigrinya] - Tigray Communication Bureau says 700 thousand inhabitants of western Tigray displaced, while the government of Amhara region denies.
- Sudan Tribune, 17 March: [Ethiopia must recognize border treaties before negotiating with Sudan: al-Burhan](#)
- Fana BC, 16 March: [EU, Germany provide Federal Police with IT supplies, Forensic items](#)
- Associated Press, 11 March: [‘People are starving’: New exodus in Ethiopia’s Tigray area](#)
- EUobserver, 11 March: [EU floats Ethiopia sanctions over humanitarian aid](#)
- World Athletics, 10 March: [Despite conflict and uncertainty, women runners from Ethiopia’s Tigray region becoming a rising force](#)

## 8. Opinion pieces

- [Cameron Hudson: Ethiopia, Take a Lesson from Sudan and Stop the War in Tigray](#)
- Omid Nouripour, Moritz Müller: [Menschenrechtsverstöße und Konflikte: Äthiopien droht zu zerbrechen](#) [in German]
- Taha Abdi: [Elections, conflict, and creeping autocracy in Ethiopia](#)
- S. Assefa: [Crossing the Tekeze](#)
- Tsaga Etefa: [What’s causing the violence in western Ethiopia](#)
- Jendayi Frazer, Judd Devermont: [Fighting in Ethiopia threatens US security interests](#)

## **Digest 19.        Massacre at Grizana == Abiy changes his discourse from “There are no Eritrean forces, no massacres” to “They will leave soon” (1 April 2021)**

So many developments with regard to the Tigray War over the last ten days! We'll address the diplomatic situation, but on the ground little has changed, and massacres, sexual violence and displacement continue! Hence, this newsletter will first bring the news on the dire humanitarian situation, and also present some important new works: a list of massacres in the Tigray war, and the report of the Horn of Africa Civil Society Forum.

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### **1. Two bright girls who give hope – refugees**

I will start with two sad stories. Two young girls who fled the war and the massacres and who suffer enormously. Listen to their suffering, but also their wisdom:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av-embeds/55106353/vpid/p08ztygg>

<https://twitter.com/tvbempt/status/1375361741270433792>

This is the new generation. I hope that they will be strong in these difficult conditions, for themselves, their family and their community! These clever, educated and brave girls give us hope for the future and for the reconstruction of Tigray.

### **2. Grizana, another massacre**

The new edition of the [“Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation”](#) includes a list of 151 massacres in Tigray since the beginning of the war. In order to illustrate the type of terror and atrocities that is widespread all over Tigray, we narrate the massacre that occurred in [Grizana](#), half way between Samre and Finerwa, some 80 km SW of Mekelle. On Wednesday 24 March, Eritrean soldiers entered the village, and at a certain moment, they missed one of their comrades. The soldiers then dragged farmers out of their house asking them about their lost comrade, which the farmers didn't know about. Farmer Adhana Dimtsu (55) was already shot dead in revenge, when the missing soldier appeared from nowhere.

In the evening of that same day, in the same village, Eritrean soldiers were asking children (at gunpoint) to show them the houses of militiamen. Among several houses, the children showed the soldiers the house of one militiaman, where they found his wife (Gidey Teweldu). She was asked “where is your husband”? She didn't say “he went to the mountains” but rather said that he is in a friend's house (presumably to avoid further attention). The soldiers forced her to take them there. She had nowhere to take them but pretended to be checking on the neighborhood. That's when they started shooting door to door. The wife was killed with her two kids as well as ten other people in that same neighborhood. Victims are Hagos Abrha (53), his wife (45) and daughter (age unknown), his brothers Tesfakiros (45) and Hailu (38), Adugna Gebrehana (29), Gebremeskel Getahun (58), Gebreyohannes Hailemariam (33), Gidey Tsegay (35), Gidey Teweldu (45) and her two kids Hadas Mruts (15) and Hailu Mruts (2). In that same incident alone, nine men, two women and two children were killed. At least five additional corpses were found in the surroundings that had been partly devoured by hyenas, and these are not identified among the villagers, presumably they were from other villages and shot while fleeing to the mountains.

After this, people left the villages and moved to areas controlled by the TDF. Grizana has become another ghost town in Tigray.

In [our previous newsletter](#), we elaborated on PM Abiy's discourses, in which he twice justified/downplayed massacres in comparison to military losses. In other parts of his discourse to Parliament, he nonetheless promised to bring anyone who committed atrocities to justice. It seems that in these battlefields around Samre and Gijet the soldiers have not heard this part or they do not believe that this might occur, or no 'order from above' has been given. In the meantime, more massacres are perpetrated.

### 3. Update of the Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation

As mentioned, the [Tigray “Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation”](#) has been updated. The **update** includes

- a new section on **status of telecommunication and banking services**, with map
- a new map on food security outcomes up to September 2021
- updated maps of civilian victims ('fully documented' as well as 'reported') and massacres
- in annex a **list of 151 massacres** in Tigray since the beginning of the war. A massacre is understood as at least five civilians killed at the same place and in the same day.

The maps can also be interactively consulted in this **web application**: <https://arcg.is/vmbWH0>

We have been **interviewed** by the Belgian newspaper De Morgen (30 March) about the preparation of this Atlas: [‘Tieners vermoord om te vermijden dat ze later wraak nemen’: Gentse geografen monitoren burgeroorlog in Ethiopië](#) [in Dutch]; English translation: [‘Teenagers killed to avoid revenge later’: Ghent geographers monitor civil war in Ethiopia](#)



#### 4. The Horn of Africa Civil Society Forum Report on Tigray

Just out! You may download the [Report on Tigray](#) by the **Horn of Africa Civil Society Forum**. It holds an awful amount of details on the war crimes in Tigray and also requests for ceasefire, inquiries and peacekeeping. Furthermore, it is important to notice that a large number **of human rights associations, from all over the wider Horn (including Rwanda)** support this document.

#### 5. “No Eritrean forces, no massacres” becomes “They will leave soon”

By the end of March, the Ethiopian PM Lt. Col. Abiy Ahmed briefly made headlines by suddenly admitting that Eritrea is involved in the Tigray war and [that massacres had been committed](#), while he had denied these facts since 5 months, even in private conversation with António Guterres, the UN Secretary General. Trying to save face after such earlier blatant lies, he travelled to Asmara and came up with a communiqué that the Eritrean forces were going to leave soon from the border areas. In the meantime, there are reports of fresh Eritrean troops being transported into Tigray, and also conscript mobilisation in Eritrea, as of the age of 16. Below is a large set of related articles, which I summarise as a set of reflections:

1. Eritrea itself does not mention the withdrawal, which undermines the credibility of the Ethiopian statement.
2. Ethiopia lied about the Eritrean presence, it might be the same with regard to withdrawal?
3. Abiy equated, even justified rape and massacres by the fact that his soldiers died. On the ground, massacres continue, such as in Grizana (see section 2) and near Negash (as reported by MSF)
4. Saying that the Eritreans were "forced" to come in to protect their borders and interests, gives them the green light to come in, increase their troops at any time.
5. There is reason to fear that the Ethiopian and Eritrean armed forces are trying to buy time, conceding “something on the border”, and still plan to win this war by “another push”
6. The common spirit in Tigray: “Why does the world only come with endless *deeply concerned* statements?”
7. Reliable diplomatic sources mention that sanctions against the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments are under way – the evidence of severe human rights infringements by these regimes is all too overwhelming

Related articles in international media:

- African Affairs, 30 March: [In comprehensive new report, U.S. government exposes human rights abuses in Tigray, Oromia, and the rest of Ethiopia](#)
- Le Monde (leading French newspaper), 26 March: [En Ethiopie, le premier ministre, Abiy Ahmed, annonce le retrait des troupes érythréennes du Tigré](#) [in French] – [English translation has been published](#)
- Financial Times, 26 March: [Ethiopia ‘will be digging up mass graves for a decade’: inside Tigray’s dirty war](#)

- TV5Monde, 26 March: [L'Erythrée, acteur clé de la crise au Tigré](#) [in French]
- Trouw (The Netherlands), 23 March: [De burgeroorlog in Tigray begint steeds meer te lijken op de Rwandese genocide](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: [The civil war in Tigray is becoming more and more like the Rwandan genocide](#)
- The Guardian, 28 March: [Scale of Tigray horror adds to pressure on Ethiopian leader](#)
- The Telegraph, 27 March: [‘We’re here to make you HIV positive’: Hundreds of women rush to Tigray hospitals as soldiers use rape as weapon of war](#)
- Globe and Mail, 25 March: [UN, Ethiopian rights agency to conduct joint investigation into abuses in Tigray region](#)
- Sky News, 24 March: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: The 'twisted joke' of denial in the violence is finally laid bare](#)
- Globe and Mail, 24 March: [Ethiopia confirms massacre by Eritrean soldiers](#)
- Eritrea Ministry of Information, 26 March. [Press Release](#). Note the body language in the second photo!
- Reuters, 25 March: [Ethiopia rejected U.S. call for unilateral ceasefire during talks, U.S. says](#)
- France24, 26 March: [Ethiopian PM's week of dramatic disclosures evades root of Tigray crisis.](#)

## 6. Opinion pieces

- Etana Dinka: [Ethiopia: The wider battle of which the Tigray war is just a part](#)
- The Guardian view on the war in Ethiopia: [Tigray's civilians need protection](#)
- Abraham T Zere: [Can Eritrea's Afwerki hold on to power after the Tigray war?](#)
- John Young video rant on the Tigray war: ([Part 1](#)) and ([Part 2](#))
- On the historical context, see a newly published book by John Young, John Markakis, Günther Schlee: 'The Nation State: A Wrong Model for the Horn of Africa'. Freely available at: <https://www.mprl-series.mpg.de/studies/14/index.html>
- Alex De Waal: [End the Battlefield Slaughter in Tigray](#)
- Awol Allo: [Ethiopia urgently needs inclusive national dialogue. And in order to start one, it needs to face its imperial past and legacy.](#)
- William Davison: recording of the [webinar on "A Path to Peace for Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict"](#), organised by the Egmont Institute.

## 7. Other news

- Awlo Media, 30 March: [ዳንኤል ከብረትና ሬዲዋን ሁሴን ያሉበት ሚዲያ ኮሚቴ ነው ያበረረን!](#) English summary: [“The war is with the people”: interview with a recently fired Tigray interim admin official and another Arena official.](#)
- Addis Standard, 30 March: [Mekelle city interim mayor resigns](#)
- Reuters, 29 March: [‘You don't belong’: land dispute drives new exodus in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Horn Daily, 29 March: [Unconfirmed reports suggest An Ethiopian-Eritrean Federation Soon](#)
- The Reporter, 27 March: [Over a thousand workers in Mekelle Industrial Park still absent](#)
- Skynews, 27 March: [Ethiopia's conflict in Tigray: Women describe how rape is used as a weapon](#)

- RFI, 27 March : [Éthiopie: l'appel du HCR pour aider les réfugiés érythréens des camps détruits au Tigré](#) [in French]
- UN News, 26 March: [Deep concern for thousands of Eritrean refugees 'scattered' in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 26 March: ['Don't shoot,' Ethiopian father begged Eritrean soldiers, daughter says](#)
- UNHCR, 26 March: [UNHCR reaches destroyed camps in northern Tigray](#)
- Washington Post, 26 March: [In Sudan's Sweltering Camps, Refugees from Tigray Dream of Independence from Ethiopia](#)
- BBC, 25 March: [Tigray conflict: The fake UN diplomat and other misleading stories](#)
- The National (UAE), 25 March: [US Congress ups the ante on Tigray, calling on Ethiopia and TPLF to cease hostilities](#)
- Associated Press, 25 March: [UN warns of 'alarming' crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- Marie Claire, 23 March: [Magi Was Excited to Be the First Ethiopian on 'The Bachelor.' Then Came the Tigray Conflict](#)
- Yeha Post, 22 March: [Tigrayan Catholics write to Pope Francis about the involvement of Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel in Tigray crisis](#)
- Our [report on the Tigray universities](#) has been upgraded. We mention additional staff members killed, the re-occupation of Raya University campus by Eritrean troops, metal fencing of female students' dormitories, after rapes by Federal Police officers, and huge material damage to MU's Veterinary campus.

## Digest 20.      A “tick list” of war crimes (12 April 2021)

The scientists’ appeal for Tigray has reached almost 3200 signatories. The text dates back to the beginning of the war. Nevertheless, we continue inviting to [sign the appeal](#); signatories may opt in to be included in the mailing list:

[https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6gagCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06\\_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform](https://web.archive.org/web/20210208163712/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6gagCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform)

Then, unfortunately, this newsletter comes again with a full catalog of war crimes (as if they have a “tick list”): starvation (section 1), massacres (2 and 3), sexual violence (4), ethnic cleansing (5), as well as opinion pieces (6) and media articles (7).

### 1. Starving Tigray

A very explicit report by the World Peace Foundation.

“Our stark conclusion is that the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea are starving the people of Tigray. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this is intentional, systematic and widespread. In today’s predicament it may be necessary for international humanitarian actors to cooperate with the authorities to provide essential assistance to the victims. It is not appropriate to praise the Ethiopian government for permitting modest acts of mercy towards the survivors of its policies.”

The report can be downloaded from: <https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/starving-tigray/>

Press articles about *Starving Tigray*

- Channel 4, 6 April: [Ethiopia: Hunger ‘used as a weapon of war’ in Tigray conflict](#)
- Radio France Internationale, 6 April: [Ethiopia targeting Tigray with 'starvation crimes' as military tactic: report](#)
- World Politics Review, 6 April: [Tigray Is Being Deliberately Starved to Death](#)
- VRT, 6 April: [Rapport: "Inwoners van Tigray \(Ethiopië\) worden bewust op grote schaal uitgehongerd als oorlogswapen"](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: [Report: “Tigray \(Ethiopia\) residents are deliberately starved on a large scale as a weapon of war”](#)
- UN News, 7 April: [Ethiopia: Amidst hostilities in Tigray, humanitarian situation remains ‘dire’](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 8 April 2021. [Tigray aid response is too little, too late, poll respondents say](#)
- TheAfricaReport, 9 April: [Ethiopia: Looming famine in Tigray is the making of ‘starvation crimes’ says report by WPF](#)
- TheAfricaReport, 9 April: [Famine in Tigray: ‘I have never documented anything as relentless & systematic as what we’re seeing’ PODCAST](#)
- Humanitarian Access SCORE Report: [Tigray, Ethiopia - Survey on the Coverage, Operational Reach, and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid](#)

## 2. Atlas of the humanitarian situation

The [Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation](#) is work in progress. It will be updated with new data – see section 3. On the other hand, the Atlas, and also the “Starving Tigray” report are already very well documented and, among others, serve as a base for new articles by Wikipedia editors. We tried to investigate the [Dabba Selama](#) massacre in Dogu’a Tembien (31 January, 12 people killed), as this occurred in a village with a monastery on top of a *mesa*, a small plateau similar to Debre Damo. Unfortunately we were not successful in documenting the Dabba Selama massacre. The reason? “In the beginning of the war, people were talking about every massacre, with full of details. Now there have been and are massacres occurring all over Tigray. Unless somebody has a relative in such a village, we cannot remember all the bad things that happen in each village...”

Press articles about the Atlas

- The Guardian, 2 April: [Ethiopia: 1,900 people killed in massacres in Tigray identified - List compiled by researchers of victims of mass killings includes infants and people in their 90s](#)
- The World radio, 2 April: [Counting the victims in Tigray](#)
- CBC, 2 April 2021: As It Happens: The Friday Edition - [Tigray, Ethiopia Massacre](#) (from 28:00 to 35:30)
- Esquerda, 3 April: [Identificadas duas mil vítimas de massacres no Tigray](#) [in Portuguese]
- CNN, 3 April: [Reports, footage of Tigray executions are 'deeply disturbing,' US senator says after CNN investigation](#)
- De Standaard (Belgium), 6 April: [‘Duizenden burgers in Tigray doelbewust geëxecuteerd’](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: [‘Thousands of civilians deliberately executed in Tigray’](#)
- The Telegraph, 7 April, 2021: [‘Their bodies were torn into pieces’: Ethiopian and Eritrean troops accused of massacre in Tigray](#)
- Big News Network, 7 April 2021: [1,900 killed in massacres in Ethiopia identified by researchers](#)
- Der Standard (Austria), 9 April: [Neue Berichte über Gräueltaten der äthiopischen Armee in Tigray](#) [in German]

## 3. Reporting the victims

Co-author of the Atlas, Tim Vanden Bempt, asks for assistance in collecting information on the victims in the war in Tigray. We collected already too many names of people who died, but unfortunately this is only the tip of the iceberg. We have lots of reports of places where shelling, killings and fighting took place, but acquiring the number of people that died at those occasions is not easy. It is important that the possible war crimes are correctly identified, so we try to work as accurate as possible. A format has been prepared: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQY8LjQlIF7rtp1bdgAM-F0edHaGG2K9DEk\\_EpK0SHZESS1A/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQY8LjQlIF7rtp1bdgAM-F0edHaGG2K9DEk_EpK0SHZESS1A/viewform)

For additional information, feel free to get in touch: [www.twitter.com/tvbempt](https://www.twitter.com/tvbempt).

#### 4. Belgium backs search for evidence of sexual violence

Belgium is releasing EUR 4 million for the victims of the violence in Tigray. Specific attention is paid to victims of sexual violence. In doing so, the country is entering a project of the International Red Cross. In addition to collecting and documenting sexual assault charges, efforts are being made to protect the affected population, bring together family members who have lost each other in the conflict and respect for humanitarian law.

‘In recent weeks, more and more reports of horrific facts have reached us’, says Development Minister Meryame Kitir. ‘Together with the International Red Cross, we want to take care of the victims as best we can and prevent the conflict from escalating further.’ The funds for the project come from the budget generally earmarked for humanitarian aid.

(De Tijd, 9 April 2021: [In Tigray is verkrachting een oorlogswapen](#) [in Dutch]) – English translation: [In the Tigray war, rape is a weapon](#))

#### 5. Ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray

In the Atlas of the humanitarian situation, there is often a lack of data for Western Tigray, because many of our contacts have fled to Sudan or to other parts of Tigray. Several others also do no longer pick up their phones... Refugees speak about encountering so many dead bodies along roads and footpaths, yet the corresponding massacres are not reported. See: The Associated Press, 7 April: [‘Leave no Tigrayan’: In Ethiopia, an ethnicity is erased...](#) Informally, the zone has been incorporated in Amhara region.

We could gather pieces of information, through sources that we cannot disclose.

In tabiya Rawyan, where the population was 16,000 before the war, it is now less than 2000; the new Amhara administration tries to bring in Amhara people who were in Sudan or elsewhere in Ethiopia.

In Ruwassa, where the population was more than 4000 before the war, it is now around 980.

In the resettlement place called "Division", all 9000 households fled. The site is now empty and guarded by Amhara militiamen. Also here, the new administration wants to relocate 10,000 ethnic Amhara from Sudan, but the conflict at the border prevented them from doing so.

In May Kadra, they kept around 2500 ethnic Tigrayans under custody before expelling around a thousand to the other side of the Tekeze. Remaining people "disappeared" (killed? fled to Sudan? deported?).

The new Amhara administration has an interest to present a "normal" situation, although sometimes they do not try to hide the extent to which Tigrayans have fled.

The displacements occurred widely in the lowlands and much less in the highlands of Western Tigray. The reason is that formal and informal resettlement schemes were only in the lowlands, in relation to the presence of highly productive soils ("Vertisols"). In the highlands, Tigrinya-speakers still speak Tigrinya and publicly identify as Wolqayté/Amhara.

About massacres: our witness saw several corpses even in mid-December - they left corpses unburied on purpose, to show people how "juntas" need to be treated. He saw about a dozen corpses next to a road at the entrance of Humera at mid-December. Impossible to count or to take a photo. An Amhara Special Forces member showed him photographs of a massacre of civilians near Addi Goshu - around 25 civilians killed according to him (presumably in November or December).

## 6. Opinion pieces

- Alex De Waal: [Biden's brewing problem in Ethiopia](#)
- Dina Tesfay: [End the war on Africans: The truth about Eritrea and Ethiopia's brutal regimes](#)
- Dirk Willem te Velde: [Ethiopia's conflict puts economic gains at risk](#)
- Goitom Gebreluel & Mulu Beyene: [Why the Tigray investigation should be conducted by the UN, alone](#)
- Harry Verhoeven: [What Eritrea Wants PODCAST](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Why peace will be elusive in Ethiopia's civil war in Tigray](#)
- Mulubrhan Balehegn: [The politics and problems of Prosperity Party Gospel](#)
- Nic Cheeseman and Yohannes Woldemariam: [Ethiopia's Perilous Propaganda War](#)

## 7. Further in the media

- Lawfare, 31 March: [Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict: Alleged Atrocities, Law of War Violations and Regional Implications](#)
- BBC, 1 April: [Evidence suggests Ethiopian military carried out massacre in Tigray](#)
- Addis Standard, 2 April: [The Interview: "There was no prior evaluation to have me discharged": former interim mayor of Mekelle](#)
- G7, 2 April: [Ethiopia: G7 Foreign Ministers' statement on Tigray](#)
- EuroNews, 2 April 2021: [G7 'seriously concerned' about human rights violations in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- Aljazeera, 2 April: [Is independence from Ethiopia the TPLF's endgame in Tigray?](#)
- Aljazeera, 2 April: [Abiy Ahmed finally came clean about Eritrean troops. What next?](#)
- Financial Times, 4 April: ['We want independence more than ever': Inside Tigray's divisive war](#)
- AlArabiya News, 4 April: [Ethiopia's PM Abiy Ahmed says army fighting 'on eight fronts', including Tigray](#)
- The Guardian, 4 April: [Ethiopia is fighting 'difficult and tiresome' guerrilla war in Tigray, says PM](#)
- Reuters, 6 April: [Three-way talks over Ethiopian dam fail in Kinshasa - statements](#)
- Borderless Magazine, 7 April 2021: [Coping with the Tigray Conflict an Ocean Away](#)

- MSF, 7 April: MSF mobile medical teams are helping to fill the gap. Today this team crossed a front line and hiked a mountain to give health care under the trees.  
[https://twitter.com/joe\\_belliveau/status/1379777487991889921](https://twitter.com/joe_belliveau/status/1379777487991889921)
- Anadolu Agency, 7 April: [Egypt warns all options open to tackle dam crisis](#)
- Sudan Tribune, 7 April: [Burhan holds meeting with Sudanese army senior officers](#)
- Financial Times, 8 April: [Ethiopia: war in Tigray threatens to end Abiy's dream of unity](#)
- Eritrea Hub, 9 April 2021. [What happened to the Tigrayan athletes who wore black](#)
- Reuters, 11 April 2021: [Egypt, Sudan reject Ethiopian proposal for data sharing on Renaissance dam](#)
- Reinventing Peace, 12 April 2021: [Eyewitness to Atrocities in Axum](#)



## Digest 21.                    **Ongoing famine, massacres and weaponized rape (23 April 2021)**

This newsletter focuses on sexual violence in the Tigray war and the upcoming famine (section 1), as well as never-ending massacres (2). We also point to local initiatives organising humanitarian assistance to Tigray (3). There is additional news from Tigray's universities (4), with Dr. Fana Hagos as new president for Mekelle University, and the restart of universities in dire conditions. The digest also contains some links to relevant opinion pieces (5) and media articles (6).

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- 21 – 7 – Elsewhere in Ethiopia

### **1. Two interviews that summarise the current situation in Tigray**

Dr. Abadi Girmay, the new Head of Tigray's Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Tigray interim administration, appointed by PM Abiy Ahmed, was interviewed by Fana, a government TV: **"Unprecedented migration, death, and famine unseen in this nation are coming to Tigray"**. [TGHAT has translated the interview](#) to English.

(To be contrasted with this one: Fana BC, 16 April 2021: [No one dies from hunger in Tigray: Commission](#))

More on this topic:

- The Economist, 22 April: [Daily chart - Tigray is edging closer to famine](#)
- CARE, 19 April: [Worries rise for Tigray residents' longer-term safety](#)
- Byline Times, 22 April: [Under the Thumb of the Military - Mass Starvation Returns to Ethiopia](#)

CBS News has [interviewed AP journalist Cara Anna on sexual violence in Tigray](#), the communication black-out and the reactions from the international community.

See also her latest article: ['Look after my babies': In Ethiopia, a Tigray family's quest](#) (23 April)

More on this topic:

- Al Jazeera, 21 April: ['A Tigrayan womb should never give birth': Rape in Tigray](#)

- Reuters, 16 April: [Health official alleges 'sexual slavery' in Tigray](#)
- Al Jazeera, 15 April: [Top Ethiopia health official alleges 'sexual slavery' in Tigray](#)
- AFP, 22 April: [Red Cross condemns 'horrific' sexual violence in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)

## 2. The Awulo massacre, one of the many

News came through that in the village of Awulo ([Tabiya Mika'el Abiy](#), southeast of Hagere Selam) a massacre took place on 1 February 2021. Awulo is a remote village, but we know it quite well as we have been involved in several projects with the local community, particularly the development of ecosystem services in the [Chelago enclosure](#) that is located along the escarpment below Awulo. Also in the Selam Seret school, located in this village, the [School WatSani](#) project had constructed an ecological toilet building ("Ecosan") and gave related training and sensibilisation. This was just our small contribution to the wider Tigray and Tembien dynamism that existed before the war. The news of the Awulo massacre trickled out very slowly, because until now, there is telephone blackout in most of Tembien.

On February 1, the Eritrean army came to Awulo, which is located at the end of a rural access road. The soldiers could drive up to the school and started searching for the TPLF leaders and/or TDF fighters, while engaging in the difficult terrain downslope from the village. There are many limestone cliffs and other slopes of over 50% steep, and the bushlands are full of thorny shrubs such as ቆጠፋጠፍ (*qontaftafo* - [Pterolobium stellatum](#)) with recurved thorns in which one may get trapped. When the Eritrean soldiers finally came back to the village, without finding the people they were looking for, they started a killing spree in the village. Twenty-four people were shot dead and numerous others were wounded. A witness said: "as they couldn't find the TDF fighters in the ቤረኻ [*berekha*, wildlands], they had to kill civilians as a revenge for their tiredness". Most of the victims are mentioned with their names on the inventory held by TGHAT (<https://www.tghat.com/victim-list/>).

More on massacres in Tigray:

- AFP, 13 April: [Eritrean Troops Injure 19 In Tigray Shooting: Doctors, Witnesses](#)
- Amnesty International, 14 April: [Ethiopia: Three killed, 19 injured in Tigray as Eritrean troops open fire on civilians](#)
- Reuters, 14 April: [Eritrean soldiers kill nine civilians in Tigray, Ethiopian regional official says](#)
- Associated Press, 15 April: [Amnesty: Eritrean troops still killing in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Corriere Nazionale, 21 April: [Etiopia: identificare quasi 2mila vittime nel Tigray](#) [in Italian]
- NPO Radio 1, 22 April: [Hulporganisaties luiden noodklok over oorlog in Tigray](#) [in Dutch]

Yet, after so many "concerns" over Tigray, expressed by international organisations and diplomats, this shocking news comes in right today: [Ethiopia signs \\$907 mln financing pact with World Bank...](#)

### 3. How can I help the people in Tigray?

Earlier on, this newsletter mentioned the initiatives taken by Caritas International. Many other international organisations and local NGOs also are working to the best of their capacity, but here we would like to highlight some citizen initiatives who have demonstrated their capacity to deliver aid to the most needy, including those in remote rural places:

- Food support for Degamba: <https://degambaschool.wixsite.com/degamba/reisen-bilder> [in German]
- Belgo-Ethiopian EthioTrees v.z.w. organises direct financial support for the poorest of the poor in Tembien (Tigray): <https://www.gofundme.com/f/food-for-farmers-in-tembien> [in English]
- The Nuremberg-based non-profit Hawelti e.V. organises direct financial support for those in need in the Aksum area: [www.hawelti.de](http://www.hawelti.de) [in German]
- Association Tesfay in Liège (Belgium): food aid and support to vulnerable families in Mekelle and Eastern Tigray: [www.tesfay.be](http://www.tesfay.be) [in French, Dutch and English]
- The Tigrayan diaspora is also collecting and sending money

### 4. News on the Tigray universities

#### Mekelle University

Dr Fana Hagos has become the new president of Mekelle University, in replacement of interim president Prof. Fetien Abay and the former president Prof. Kindeya Gebrehiwot. [Prof. Haftu Berhe](#) and Dr. Fana were nominated for the position, and Dr. Fana has been appointed. Dr. Fana belongs to MU's Department of Law. She was the President of the Higher Court of Tigray. Last September, she made headlines, when swearing in Tigray's elected president Debretsion Gebremichael: [https://youtu.be/YA\\_PWCdewC8?t=3001](https://youtu.be/YA_PWCdewC8?t=3001)

See also: Addis Standard, 15 April: [Fana Hagos, former President of Tigray Supreme Court appointed as President of Mekelle University](#)

Mekelle University is now preparing to receive first year's students. According to official data, there will be a high number of students from other parts of Ethiopia. These students may fill gaps left by Tigrayan students and may simply not be aware of the severity of the war conditions in Tigray.

#### Aksum and Adigrat Universities

Aksum and Adigrat Universities have registered all but the first year's students. Both universities had to prioritise on buying mattresses for the students' dormitories, as those largely had been largely looted by the Eritrean soldiers. In addition to this, there are no computers, books, printers, LCD projectors, or any other facilities. Adigrat University has purchased some basic materials such as stationary. Reportedly, the campuses "look like refugee camps". A faculty dean of one of the

universities mentions that “we are not ready at all, but the Ethiopian government wants us to show that things are going back to normal. Many Tigrayan students are absent while students from other parts of Ethiopia travel here and seem to be convinced or convince themselves that Tigray is peaceful again”. According to this faculty dean, about 90% of the absent students are Tigrayans. They particularly fear for the conditions along the roads in Tigray: young men are randomly killed by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers, while women are at risk of being raped and abducted.

## 5. Opinion pieces

- Tewodros Tsegaye: [Bait and switch diplomacy: Abiy and Isaias's two-act drama](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Why peace will be elusive in Ethiopia's civil war in Tigray](#)
- Fassil Hailu: [Reasons the international community is unable to end the war in Tigray](#)
- Zitto Kabwe: [What Ethiopia needs is a UN probe into genocide in Tigray](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Switch Tigray's Internet Back On](#)
- Mesfin Hagos: [The Tale of Eritrean Withdrawal from Tigray: But Where is the Border?](#)
- Al Jazeera: [William Davison on Eritrea's withdrawal announcement](#)

## 6. Other articles in the media

- Reuters, 23 April: [U.N. Security Council, for first time, declares concern about Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- VoA, 22 April: [UN Security Council Calls for More Aid Access to Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- ABC News, 20 April: [US raising alarm over 'deteriorating' humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region](#)
- Médiapart, 7 April: «[La responsabilité de la France est engagée dans des crimes de guerre](#)» [in French – à partir de la 27ème minute, cela concerne le Tigray]
- The New York Times, 15 April 2021: [Eritrean Troops Continue to Commit Atrocities in Tigray, U.N. Says](#)
- Africa Confidential, 15 April 2021: [Eritrea entrenches in Tigray](#)
- The Economist, 15 April 2021: [Blowing in the wind - The war in Tigray is taking a frightful human toll - It is also rattling Ethiopia's economy](#)
- Reuters, 16 April 2021: [Eritrea Admits Presence in Ethiopia's Tigray, Tells UN It Is Withdrawing](#)
- Euractiv, 20 April: [EU set to send election observers to Ethiopia despite Tigray conflict](#)
- EUobserver, 21 April: [Interview Pekka Haavisto - 'Dire' suffering continues in Ethiopia war, EU envoy says](#)
- Washington Post, 15 April: [UN: Tigray's humanitarian crisis worsens, no Eritrean exit](#)
- NPR, 20 April: [Updates On The Conflict In Ethiopia's Tigray Region](#)
- Overt Defense, 21 April: [Tigray Rebels Down Government Helicopter in Embattled Ethiopian Province](#)

## **7. Elsewhere in Ethiopia**

Addis Standard, 20 April: [Protests happening in multiple cities in Amhara region denouncing reports of targeted attacks against Amhara community](#)

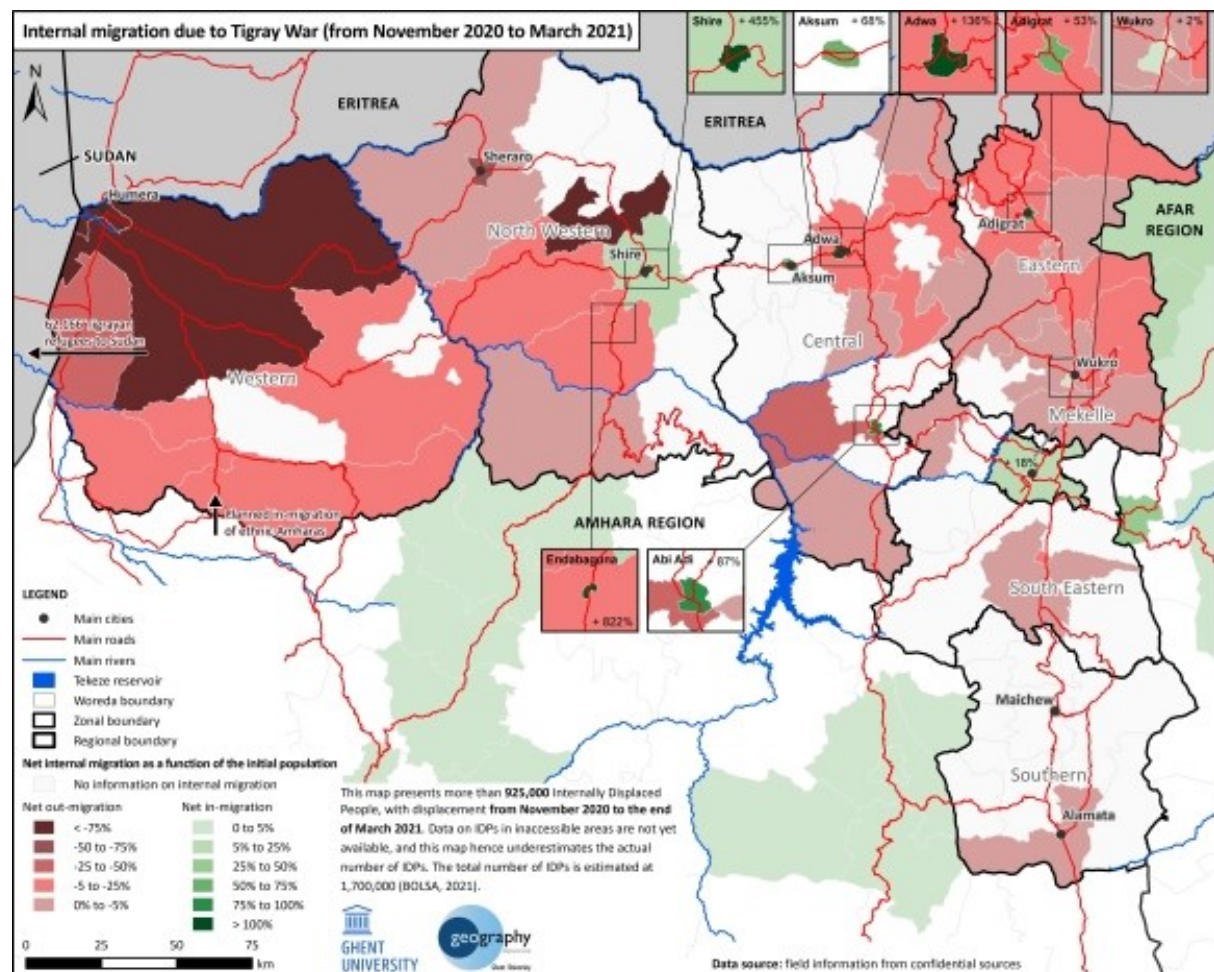
Reuters, 20 April: [Eighteen killed in clashes between Ethiopia's Oromo, Amhara groups](#)

Sudan Tribune, 20 April: [Sudan refers GERD issue to UN Security Council](#)

RFI, 21 April: [Un nouveau front en Éthiopie entre Amharas et Oromos](#) [in French]

## Digest 22. Exclusive map of IDP situation == A video recording emerges of the destructions in Hagere Selam (2 May 2021)

This circular presents the latest edition of the Tigray Atlas, with focus on new maps related to internally displaced persons (section 1); a video evidencing the destruction of Hagere Selam that we mentioned months ago already (section 2); international calls for action, beyond statements of concern (section 3), some announcements (section 4), opinion pieces (section 5), and media articles (section 6). Unfortunately, no good news to bring, but witnessing is also important!



### 1. A new edition of TIGRAY: ATLAS OF THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION has been published

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181\\_Tigray\\_Atlas\\_of\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_situation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181_Tigray_Atlas_of_the_humanitarian_situation)

Maps have been updated on conflict incidents, territorial control, casualties and massacres – unfortunately still on the rise. Casualties also have been presented on monthly basis (ANNEX B).

In addition, two new maps have been developed, presenting the situation of **internally displaced people** (IDPs). By the end of March 2021, 1.7 million people had been displaced since the onset of the



conflict. The location and living conditions of more than 925,000 of these internally displaced people is known, of which 85% is living in the towns of Shire, Adwa, Mekelle, Aksum and Adigrat (ranked in decreasing order). The new maps present the areas in Tigray where people have left (some areas now virtually void of civilian population) and the areas where strong in-migration occurs. The zones of origin of the IDPs are graphically represented through pie charts.

## 2. Video of the Hagere Selam destruction

A video has emerged about the destruction in Hagere Selam. “It was on Dec 3 -5/2020 and 23 people were killed in three days. Some of them were buried by the few people who were around and some have been eaten by hyenas (small remains of their body with some clothes were found and buried later) “The video was recorded on 12/12 in the morning, when the people who escaped to neighbouring villages started coming back.



Pictures showing buildings destroyed on the main road of Hagereselam

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ln1ivcvi9ej9txq/AAD45yK\\_gZuNTnQiutrR6ZQka?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ln1ivcvi9ej9txq/AAD45yK_gZuNTnQiutrR6ZQka?dl=0)

In the meantime, much worse videos have already appeared about other places in Tigray, but Hagere Selam is one of the destroyed towns in Tigray that has been systematically filmed all along the main road.

Timeline: 00:13 blood? // 00:34 Hotel – The first “ground +1” building in Hagere Selam // 00:45 small shop (“soap, candles and biscuits”) // 01:43 commercial bank // 01:51 hotel // 02:30 another hotel // 03:26 Hotel & Wegagen Bank // 03:47 Hagere Selam milk cooperative’s shop, clothes shop (the lower part of the door is the weak place) // 04:03 blood? // 04:25 barber and music shop // 04:30 left (and small shouting), a minibus tries to find passengers for Mekelle // 04:51 suspected traces of killing //

04:55-06:52 Dedit microcredit bank (the most severely damaged from all) // 06:58 juice house at left, coffee house at right // 07:03 new administration building (not yet operational when the war started)

### 3. More calls for action, beyond statements of concern

**Helen Clark and Rachel Kyte:** [In Tigray, Sexual Violence Has Become a Weapon of War – The world must step in now and call the assaults what they are: a war crime.](#)

- *“The world knows enough to say that war crimes are happening in Tigray. We should not need to wait until we are able to conduct full and thorough investigations before we act to stop rape as a weapon of war. We should not have to count the graves of children before we act to stop starvation crimes.”*

**Mark Lowcock:** [‘Do the right thing’ and protect civilian infrastructure during conflict: UN relief chief](#)

- The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has reiterated that rape is being used as a weapon of war. He said that six months after the conflict started, the rapes had not stopped.
- Speaking to the UNSC, he also said that “They are deliberately and systematically organized, targeted, ethnically based, and they are intended to terrorize, humiliate and brutalize.”
- He is urging for the international community to step in and hold the perpetrators accountable. Political dialogue, but also if necessary sanctions, need to be leveraged “to ensure respect for the law and the protection of civilians and the objects they depend on to survive”.
- In the same briefing, the President of the ICRC has also said that it is critical “for the Council to show leadership, so that the suffering of the women, men and children who have already lived through the horrors of wars is not compounded”.

[UK International Development Committee calls for UK Government action:](#)

- The UK Government should use its relationship with Ethiopia to ensure its Government protects the population from violence and ensure immediate protection of communities in the region from human rights abuses, including sexual violence.
- The UK Government should bear in mind its obligations to take appropriate action in line with the UN Genocide Convention should the Ethiopian Government fail to take the actions it needs to take to protect its people.



- In accordance with UN resolution 2417 (2018), the UK Government should explore whether to use the mechanisms of the UN Security Council to press for penalties such as sanctions against actors found to be obstructing the delivery of essential humanitarian supplies and using starvation as a weapon of war.

#### 4. Announcements

- **GSTS-Agriculture Emergency** Response for Tigray – We need to design ways for post-war rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in Tigray. Please write your ideas, suggestions and how you would like to contribute. [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdRWwYtcYJnQgk0Mn\\_nYylk2OKY9S28e26\\_qCfBsEr8\\_G-bZw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdRWwYtcYJnQgk0Mn_nYylk2OKY9S28e26_qCfBsEr8_G-bZw/viewform)
- ‘The War Waged Against Tigrayan Women’, Monday 17 May, 16:00-17:00 BST, **webinar** hosted by the Coalition for Genocide Response. Register [here](#).
- Messaggio ai nostri amici **italiani**: Il collega Davide Tommasin pubblica un blog che contiene numerose traduzioni in Italiano di articoli di stampa internazionali relativi alla guerra del Tigray. Puoi visitarlo a: <http://tommasin.org/>

#### 5. Opinion pieces

- Alex de Waal: Abiy Ahmed’s Counterrevolution <https://thebaffler.com/latest/abiys-counterrevolution-de-waal>
- Ann Fitz Gerald and Hugh Segal: [Ethiopia: A New Proxy Battlespace?](#) (note that [Fitz Gerald](#), in own words, is [extremely well-connected to the Ethiopian security sector officials](#))
- Awol Allo: [Ethiopia urgently needs inclusive national dialogue](#)
- Bahar Oumer: [Ethiopia should reschedule the June election. Here is why.](#)
- Gurjit Singh: [The African Union and the Tigray crisis](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Ethiopia’s Tigray War Is Fueling Amhara Expansionism](#)
- Martin Plaut: [The International Community Struggles to Address the Ethiopian Conflict](#)
- René Lefort: [Ethiopia’s vicious deadlock](#)

#### 6. In the media

- AlJazeera, 1 May 2021: [Ethiopia to designate TPLF, OLF-Shene as ‘terror’ groups](#)
- AFP, 30 April 2021: [Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict: Six months on and no end in sight](#)
- CNN, 30 April 2021: [Tigray could face famine without increased access to region, US aid official says](#)

- The East African, 30 April 2021: [Opposition parties ask UN to ensure Eritrean forces leave Tigray](#)
- The Guardian, 30 April 2021: [Ending Tigray conflict will test UK's claim to be 'force for good'](#)
- AFP, 30 April 2021: [‘No more sacred places’: Heritage sites under siege in Tigray conflict – “Plus rien n’est sacré” : le patrimoine du Tigré victime de la guerre](#) [in French]
- Addis Standard, 29 April 2021: [OFC and OLF call for dialogue and national consensus before elections; OLA calls for ceasefire and preconditioned national dialogue](#)
- Medafrica Times, 29 April 2021: [The EU disengages financially from Eritrea](#)
- AP, 29 April 2021: [‘Clean out our insides’: Ethiopia detains Tigrayans amid war](#)
- Africa Confidential, 29 April 2021: [Issayas in for the long haul](#)
- Addis Standard, 28 April 2021: [Armed forces from Tigray launch attack inside Amhara region; local officials admit the attack, say casualties include civilians](#)
- AFP, 27 April 2021: [Eritrean troops block, loot food aid in Tigray: documents – Ethiopie: des soldats érythréens bloquent, pillent l’aide alimentaire au Tigré](#) [in French]
- Le Soir, 27 April: [En Ethiopie, le syndrome d’une Yougoslavie africaine](#) [in French]
- Le Soir, 27 April: [Corne de l’Afrique Le jeu dangereux des parrains régionaux](#) [in French]
- The National News, 27 April: [Blinken calls on Ethiopian and Eritrean forces to withdraw from Tigray](#)
- Der Spiegel, 26 April 2021: [Eritreas Diktator Isaias Afwerki – Der gefährlichste Mann am Horn von Afrika](#) [in German]
- Addis Standard, 26 April 2021: [Sec. Blinken presses PM Abiy for immediate, full & verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Tigray; end hostilities immediately](#)
- Vox, 24 April 2021: [“Dying by blood or by hunger”: The war in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, explained](#)
- New York Times, 24 April 2021: [The anguish of the World’s Doctor](#)
- PassBlue, 22 April 2021: [Tigray Can’t Wait: The UN Security Council Must Act to End Sexual Assault Now](#)
- Place St Pierre, 19 April 2021: [Guerre civile au Tigré, la situation sur le terrain](#) (Fulvio Beltrami) [in French]

## Digest 23.        **Mekelle, a depressed city == Geo-location of massacre sites** **(17 May 2021)**

This digest of the humanitarian situation in Tigray includes (1) a sad city-trip to Mekelle, (2) the status of farmland preparation in 2021, (3) the power of geolocation to identify war crimes, (4) an overview of recent media articles and (5) opinion pieces.

While we know that several of you forward this digest to their friends, we like to remind that you may also continue to invite signatories for the [Appeal by concerned scientists and development professionals for Tigray](#), and the related [Avaaz petition](#).

### **1. A walk through Mekelle in May 2021**

Recently, a good friend in Mekelle walked me through the city and we did the following observations, after an absence of more than a year, due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and the [Tigray War](#):

- Wake-up in Mekelle has always been early. We were used to see a dynamic town, as soon as the daylight and the bird sounds were there. Shutters being opened, coffee being prepared, people getting ready to start working early. But now, curfew is imposed from dusk to dawn (6 AM); people seem afraid to step out of the door in the morning. The first *bajaj* (motor tricycle) appears around 6:30 only. A few people are walking to their work: head down, a rushed walk in straight line without making eye contact with anybody. Very reluctantly, the town wakes up around 6:45 AM and becomes alive by 8 AM.
- Everywhere we see Ethiopian (ENDF) soldiers, patrolling at the back of Ural trucks and Toyota pick-ups moving in group. They are heavily armed, machine guns mounted and ready to shoot. Why do they all wear red barets and black sunglasses? Do they have something to hide? There are less street killings by the military than a few months ago, but stories of people being beaten up or abducted are frequent.
- We talk with an old man who fled to Mekelle: “nobody is helping us”, “nobody is doing anything”. He had a farm in Imbaseneyti. The Eritreans burned it down – killed all his animals; with his wife, they came to Mekelle to seek assistance. The ‘able’ generation stayed behind, hiding in bushes and gorges. The old man starts crying and beating his own head as during a funeral ceremony. Other men start crying and mourning.
- We see lots of cars of international NGOs and UN agencies, all of them with two big flags (one in front of the car, one in the back). The flag thing seems a new trend in Mekelle: even EthioTelecom, Mekelle University, and private companies are now “flagging” their cars. Many of the bigger compounds have been rented out to aid organizations, also with flags and all kind of stickers on the gates. It is good that they are there, but a year ago we did not need all that aid. Now they are there to try and cure what has been destroyed in this war.
- The staff of many international NGOs present in Mekelle speak only Amharic – the communication with the local Tigrinya speakers is not easy. We wonder why knowledge of Tigrinya is not a criterion in the job announcements of INGOs.

- A few bank agencies are open, some ATMs are working, but to take out your salary, you better plan for half a day queuing at the ATM
- The Hawelti monument, memorial for “woyane” martyrs is still there, as is the large photo of Meles Zenawi. The compound itself – once the pride of Mekelle - is messy: lots of trash heaps and Ethiopian soldiers washing and drying their clothes.
- All over the town, nobody is laughing, even not smiling. People telephone discreetly; there is much distrust. Text messaging to and from abroad is impossible. The lucky ones get short access to the internet, by begging from friends who work in administrations or NGOs. There is internet in some hotels where the international people come.
- Overall, the people in town look slim due to stress and hunger, many dirty clothes, desperate faces.
- Managing the household has some challenges, because of the frequent power cuts. Make sure to have your grain grinded, bake your injeras -we say *tayta* in Tigrinya- whenever power comes in order to have some reserve, have charcoal and firewood at hand. The price of these products tripled, which is catastrophic for the poor. The water supply is less functional even than before the war, water needs to be purchased from private lorries; sometimes a Red Cross lorry distributes water for free.
- Unlike Shire, the internally displaced people in Mekelle are under cover, mostly in school buildings – newly arrived IDPs stay outside until they find a place in a school. There is lack of toilets, and people often just “sit” outside. They did not receive any food aid. On Easter, together with the neighbourhood, we visit them, bring food and share the Easter meal with them.
- Due to Covid and the war, children and youngsters have not been to school, since more than a year now! Many people are not wearing face protection masks – due to war the Covid threat seems minor to many people, yet there are daily funeral processions.
- Unlike other towns, the two big hospitals in Mekelle (Ayder and General Hospital) have been relatively free from looting. Local youth protected the hospitals after the Tigray forces left Mekelle – reportedly the neighbourhood was alerted by someone who could use the speakers of the nearby mosque. Elsewhere, there are hardly any hospital services, women deliver at home, even in forests and caves while hiding for the war. Many people come from far to Mekelle to get treated in its’ hospitals, taking the risk of being shot.
- We interrupt our walk through Mekelle and take a coffee – soldiers pass and the owner of the coffee house is happy that they move on. She hides her beauty with careless clothes and a scarf.
- Numerous women have been raped. The victims hide themselves and do not speak, but nurses cannot hold their tears, and the whole town knows the top-three of rapists: 1. (and by far) Eritrean soldiers, 2. Ethiopian soldiers, 3. Civilian perpetrators.
- Lawlessness has increased. Criminals take smartphones and money in the day time. People do not react for fear of reprisals. I’m warned: its better to move with empty pockets and just a cheap mobile! – A few years ago, some guests from South Africa were surprised that we could freely walk in Mekelle without fear day and night – and now Mekelle is in that same lawless situation!
- We visit the Bureau of Agriculture. Before, it was a lively place from where the small miracle of Tigray’s agri development over three decades was guided. Now, staff are distressed, have no data on the status of land preparation, and “we cannot help our farmers; they are trying to sustain their survival in one or another way”. (see section 2)
- We talk with government employees: “we don’t know what we will eat next month. We are hopeless”.

- Every religious leader confirms that war rages on in many areas and that the humanitarian situation is getting worse. Eritreans are blocking access to many areas and preventing farmers from ploughing. “We Tigrayans are not living any more, merely surviving from day to day”. They cannot hold back their tears when describing the situation in Tigray. There is lots of bitterness about the relationship with the religious leaders in Addis Ababa – “they even tried to silence and continuously harass Abune Mathias”.
- Evening, after six: you can’t go anywhere to try from time to time to have a relaxing moment with your friends – there is curfew. But in the nearby town Kwiha all bars are open – for the soldiers...
- When the night comes, houses are locked firmly, every slit along shutters blocked with curtains and other textile, no light should filter out, “do not attract their attention”... No singing in the churches overnight... The dogs stay silent for a short time, but soon hyenas enter the town, whoop and giggle - the dogs respond through the night.

## 2. Cropping in Tigray in 2021

Over the last weeks, the UGent geographers’ team has been busy analysing the state of the art of ploughing in Tigray in 2021. We interpreted photographs, conducted interviews, worked with Sentinel satellite imagery. Farmers are afraid for being killed by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers while ploughing, Eritreans even have forbidden to till the land. There is lack of seeds, fertiliser. And yet, people are trying. The [draft article can be consulted on ResearchGate](#) – comments and suggestions are welcome!

Analysis of irrigated cropping is underway, but we can already say that several irrigation areas have been cropped with cereals (which demand less presence in the fields) rather than labour intensive cash crops – every man seen working in farmlands is a target for the military! In Western Tigray, many lands are unploughed and lack of irrigation made whole banana plantations to die (unpublished results!).

## 3. Other geolocation studies

After early reporting, the [massacre of at the edge of a cliff in Mahbere Dego](#) in January made headlines on the BBC again – the Ethiopian soldiers filmed their ‘bravery’, which allowed to geolocate the exact place of the massacre. The Citizen Evidence Lab, explains: [How to Crack Complex Geolocation Challenges: A Case Study of the Mahibere Dego Massacre](#).

At Debre Abbay, geolocation of graphic photographs has allowed [reconstructing exactly how a mass killing by ENDF took place](#). Recently, [close-up photos of the killers](#) desecrating their victims have been published by TGHAT – ultimately, this *must* lead to international court cases!

Earlier on, in parallel to the cluster bombing on Samre, we evidenced rampaging and a killing spree by ENDF/EDF in which [more than 500 homesteads were burned down](#) near Gijet. Ted Galt worked with Sentinel satellite imagery, developed an algorithm to locate burned homesteads, and draped the results over Google Earth imagery. We can really visualise how entire villages have been burned down. (<https://twitter.com/Quen10Tarantino/status/1391172618691153925>)

#### 4. In the media

- The Telegraph, 15 May: [Massacres, rapes and starvation: Breaking through the blackout to expose Tigray's 'crimes against humanity'](#)
- AFP, 15 May: [Ethiopia Defers Polls Indefinitely Over Logistical Issues](#)
- Press Statement, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, May 15, 2021: [Continuing Atrocities and Denial of Humanitarian Access in Ethiopia's Tigray Region](#)
- The Guardian, 14 May: ['Bodies are being eaten by hyenas; girls of eight raped': inside the Tigray conflict](#)
- Reuters, 14 May: [Ethiopia revokes press credentials of New York Times reporter](#)
- U.S. Department of State, 14 May: [Travel by U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman](#)
- 14 May: [Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on restricted humanitarian access to Tigray](#)
- Catholic News, 14 May: [Atrocities still occurring in Ethiopia's Tigray region, says priest](#)
- The New York Times, 13 May: [As Ethiopia Fights in Tigray Region, a Crackdown on Journalists](#)
- National News, 13 May: [Congress pushes Biden administration to enact sanctions over Tigray conflict](#)
- Amnesty International, 13 May: [Ethiopia: The need for an independent international investigation of the Axum Massacre](#)
- Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, 13 May: Webinar recording - [The Humanitarian Crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray Region](#)
- CNN, 12 May: [Eritrean troops disguised as Ethiopian military are blocking critical aid in Tigray](#)
- VICE, 12 May: ['They Set Everything On Fire': The Paramilitary Forces Killing People They're Meant to Protect](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 12 May: [Ethiopia's Axum Findings Ignore Massacre of Civilians](#)
- NPR, 11 May: [Behind The Humanitarian Crisis Caused By The Civil War In Ethiopia](#)
- Addis Standard, 10 May: [Tigrayans repatriated from Saudi Arabia kept in detention, police unwilling to comment](#)
- The Telegraph, 10 May 2021. ['At least' 78 priests 'massacred' in one zone of Tigray, leaked letter claims](#)
- Associated Press, 10 May: [US hosts Ethiopian Orthodox Church head after Tigray warning](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 10 May: [In Tigray's war, ancient Christian and Muslim houses of worship are increasingly under attack](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 10 May: [Where are the Garima Gospels? In Ethiopia, scholars fear the worst for one of Christianity's oldest manuscripts](#)
- AFP, 9 May: [About 120 Ex-peacekeepers from Ethiopia Seek Asylum in Sudan, UN says](#)
- BBC Newshour, 8 May: Context of the Patriarch's interview, start at 14:04 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w172xv52fq3mrmn>
- Associated Press, 8 May: [Ethiopian Orthodox Church patriarch blasts Tigray 'genocide'](#)
- Today News Africa, 8 May: [Abiy Ahmed 'completely' doesn't deserve Nobel Peace Prize, Oromo leaders say](#)
- MO\* Magazine, 8 May: Ethiopië-expert Kjetil Tronvoll ziet een land tussen hamer en aambeeld: ['Ik vrees dat het Ethiopië van vandaag niet lang meer zal bestaan'](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: ['I fear that Ethiopia as we know it today will no longer exist'](#)
- Fana BC, 7 May: [Ethiopia, World Bank sign \\$ 200m loan agreement](#)
- Bloomberg, 7 May: [Hunger stalks Ethiopia's Tigray Region after six months of war](#)

- UNOCHA, 7 May: [Ethiopia – Tigray Region - Humanitarian update](#)
- UNOCHA, 5 May: [Daily Noon Briefing Highlights: Ethiopia](#)
- The Times, 7 May: [Bodies pile up as hidden horrors of Ethiopian war are revealed](#)
- Reuters, 7 May: [Ethiopia's crackdown on ethnic Tigrayans snares thousands](#)
- AFP, 5 May 2021: [Ethiopie: MSF s'inquiète de niveaux "alarmants" de malnutrition au Tigré \[in French\]](#) - [‘Alarming’ malnutrition in Ethiopia’s war-hit Tigray: MSF](#)
- AFP, 5 May 2021: [Éthiopie: le chef du gouvernement intérimaire du Tigré remplacé \[in French\]](#) - [Ethiopia replaces head of interim gov’t in war-wracked Tigray](#)
- Associated Press, 5 May 2021: [In Ethiopia camp, displaced Tigrayans live with hunger, fear](#)
- MSF, 4 May: Ethiopia: [People in rural Tigray hit by impact of crisis and humanitarian neglect](#)
- Amnesty International, 4 May: [Ethiopia: Tepid international response to Tigray conflict fuels horrific violations over past six months](#)
- PBS Frontline, 4 May: New documentary: [Escaping Eritrea](#)
- Aljazeera, 4 May: [Tiny ethnic group fears extinction as Tigray war enters 6th month](#)
- South Seattle Emerald, 4 May: [March Draws Attention to Genocide in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region](#)
- Irish times, 4 May: [Mass rape used as weapon six months into war in Ethiopia’s Tigray](#)
- Associated Press, 4 May: [Refugee doctor chronicles Tigray’s pain as he treats it](#)
- EEAS, 3 May: [Ethiopia: Statement by the High Representative Josep Borrell on the cancellation of the Election Observation Mission](#)
- France24, 3 May: [DEBATE Which way for Ethiopia? Abiy cracks down on regional revolts ahead of elections](#)
- ReliefWeb, 3 May: [Gender Analysis Key Findings: Women's Exploitation & Gender-based Violence Across Ethiopia’s Tigray Crisis](#)
- TGHAT, 3 May: [Massacre in the church of Medhanie Alem Gu’etelo, on the parish’s most important day of the year, the Festival of Jesus the Savior of Gu’etolo](#)
- Save the Children, 3 May: [Six months on: Almost 5,000 children separated from parents by conflict in Tigray](#)

## 5. Opinions

- Alex de Waal: [Biden’s brewing problem in Ethiopia](#)
- Anonymous in Addis Standard: [The case for ceasefire, dialogue and reconciliation in Tigray: Why and how?](#)
- Federico Rogai: [Ethiopia’s debt: an economic and political liability](#)
- Goitom Gebreluel: [The tripartite alliance destabilising the Horn of Africa](#)
- Joshua Meservey: [America Faces Tough Choices as Tigray War Continues in Ethiopia](#)
- Micheal Rubin: [Abiy Ahmed Has Condemned Ethiopia to Dissolution](#)
- Seeye Abraha Hagos: [Why Eritrea Won’t Leave Ethiopia](#)
- Simon Tisdall: [Cries of the victims of mass rape go unheard in Ethiopia’s mountain war](#)
- William Davison: [The alleged atrocities in Tigray risk tearing Ethiopia apart](#) (author stresses that the word “alleged” has been [inserted in the headline without his approval](#))



## Digest 24.      The catastrophic humanitarian situation in Tigray makes headlines worldwide (31 May 2021)

The catastrophic humanitarian situation in Tigray is now (finally) making headlines in international media (section 1). Besides international reactions that become stronger (section 2), we will also give some insights into how the Tigray people are trying to resist to what Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers call “our season” (section 3). And still, the Ethiopian authorities are attempting to get away with it, using various tactics (section 4). We conclude our newsletter with a digest of press publications (many of them translated from French, Dutch or German - section 5).

### 1. Humanitarian disaster

The humanitarian situation in Tigray is catastrophic. Besides massacres and rape that are widely used as a weapon of war, one third of the population has been chased from their residential place, what is euphemistically referred to as “IDP” (internally displaced people). Mothers are giving birth in the streets: [https://twitter.com/Mizu\\_Tile/status/1396046118258102272](https://twitter.com/Mizu_Tile/status/1396046118258102272)

The FEWSNET briefing of 17 May 2021 used the following words: “this reduction in household access to cash income has resulted in a widespread food security Emergency in the region and has likely led to even more severe consumption gaps for worst-affected households.” This can be decoded to mean that there is not just phase 4 (Emergency) over most of the region, but also phase 5 (Famine) pockets in Tigray. There are now a large number of media reports on these dire conditions:

- The Times, 31 May: [Civilians killed in Tigray war identified but thousands remain](#)
- National Geographic, 28 May: [A grave humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Ethiopia. ‘I never saw hell before, but now I have.’](#)
- The Times, 28 May: [Ethiopian hospitals trashed by soldiers as Tigray fighting escalates](#)
- UN News, 28 May: [Grave concerns over 'dire' and deteriorating situation in war-torn Tigray region](#)
- Associated Press, 28 May: [‘Our season’: Eritrean troops kill, rape, loot in Tigray](#)
- ARD Weltspiegel, 27 May: A German TV travels through a war zone: Tigray, not arriving at peace. [See the half hour TV report and English summary](#)
- AFP, 27 May: [Displaced Tigrayans accuse soldiers of torture, 'murder': document](#)
- New York Times, 26 May: [Famine Looms in Ethiopia’s War-Ravaged Tigray Region, U.N. Says](#)
- Radio France internationale, 26 May: [Tigré: un massacre commis par des soldats érythréens à Goda](#) [in French] – English translation: [Tigray: a massacre committed by Eritrean soldiers in Goda](#)
- The Telegraph, 24 May: [Exclusive: Ethiopians suffer horrific burns in suspected white phosphorus attacks](#)
- Radio France internationale, 21 May: [Au Tigré, les agriculteurs sont les premières victimes d'un conflit qui dure](#) [in French] – English translation: [In Tigray, the farmers are the first victims of a conflict that is lasting](#)
- NOS, 20 May: [Deur staat voor buitenwereld nog maar op een kier in Ethiopische deelstaat Tigray](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: [Door is only ajar for outside world in Ethiopian state of Tigray](#)
- UN OCHA, 20 May: [Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update](#)



- AFP, 19 May: [Ethiopian Troops Search Hospital For Enemy 'Soldiers': Doctors](#)
- Al Jazeera, 18 May: [‘No food for days’: Starvation stalks Tigray as war drags on](#)
- AFP, 17 May: [Situation in Ethiopia's Tigray 'horrific': WHO chief](#)
- MSF, 17 May: [Photostory: Reaching the forgotten communities of the Tigray crisis](#)
- NCR, 17 May: [Local priest: Atrocities still occurring in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- RFI, 17 May: [Éthiopie : les habitants de Tuhuli, dans le Tigré, racontent l'enfer](#) [in French] – English translation: [Ethiopia: The people of Tuhuli, in Tigray, tell the story of hell](#)
- EU observer, 17 May: [EU: Over 5 million people risk 'starvation' in Ethiopia](#)
- Tagesspiegel, 16 May: [Patriarch warnt vor „Völkermord“ in Tigray](#) [in German]
- CNN, 15 May: [US condemns 'atrocities' in Tigray and calls for those responsible to be 'held to account' after CNN investigation](#)
- Radio France internationale, 12 May: [Éthiopie: avec les déplacés du Tigré, naufragés à Mekele](#) [in French]
- RFI, 10 May: [Éthiopie: au Tigré, une Pâques orthodoxe entre fête, tristesse et deuil](#) [in French] – English translation: [Ethiopia: in Tigray, an Orthodox Easter between celebration, sadness and mourning](#)
- ARD tagesshow, 10 May: [Ein Krieg, der keiner sein soll](#) [in German], English translation: [A war that shouldn't be one](#)
- Radio France internationale, 12 May: [Conflit au Tigré : pour le patriarche de Mekele «Abiy Ahmed marche dans les traces d'Issayas Afewerki»](#) - English translation: [Conflict in Tigray: for the patriarch of Mekele “Abiy Ahmed walks in the footsteps of Issayas Afewerki”](#)

Upcoming webinar, 8 June: [Voices From Tigray - Brutalities against Religious leaders, Holy Places and Heritage in Tigray](#)

## 2. International reactions

International reactions and pressure are becoming more important. Finally, the world is going beyond expressions of ‘serious concern’. Some key points of the U.S. senate Foreign Affairs Committee hearing:

1. The State Department is conducting a legal review as to whether war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. The Patriarch’s allegation of genocide is being taken seriously.
2. The comparison with Darfur is being made.
3. On the humanitarian issue, the comparison is with the 1984 famine in Ethiopia.
4. The U.S. is considering utilizing the Global Magnitsky Act which would give far-reaching powers to sanction individuals. They also mentioned that they would be ready to pursue accountability to the highest level.
5. The elections were mentioned in passing, to the effect that they would have no credibility, and that a national dialogue was needed.
6. Concern with the regional order in the Horn of Africa (and U.S. national security) was expressed.

The video of the proceedings can be found here: <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/ethiopia-in-crisis-us-strategy-and-policy-response-052721>

Related media articles:

- VRT, 29 May: [VN waarschuwt voor dreigende hongersnood in Ethiopische regio Tigray](#) – (UN warns of looming famine in Ethiopian region of Tigray) [in Dutch, Tigrinya and English]
- Bloomberg, 28 May: [U.S. to Freeze Funding for Ethiopia as Tigray Abuses Surface](#)
- Reuters, 27 May: [U.S. warns of further action against Ethiopia, Eritrea over Tigray](#)
- BBC, 27 May: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: Biden demands ceasefire and end to abuses](#)
- NTV, 27 May: [Biden fordert Waffenruhe in Tigray](#) [in German]
- White House, 26 May: [Statement by President Joe Biden on the Crisis in Ethiopia](#)
- CNN, 26 May: [Tigrayans told, 'We'll see if America will save you now,' as hundreds rounded up by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers](#)
- Politico, 23 May: [EU 'seriously concerned' about press rights in Ethiopia](#)
- The Guardian, 23 May: [Washington toughens stance to fight atrocities in Ethiopia](#)
- Bloomberg, 22 May: [U.S. Weighs Financial Sanctions Against Ethiopia Over Tigray War](#)
- Foreign Policy, 21 May: [Biden Administration Plans Visa Restrictions on Ethiopian Officials Over Tigray](#)
- CNN, 21 May: [US Senate passes unanimous resolution calling for withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Ethiopia](#)
- US Department of State, 19 May: [Secretary Blinken's Meeting with Finnish Foreign Minister Haavisto](#)
- Today News Africa, 19 May: [Biden administration says it remains committed to solving Tigray crisis amid accusations of inaction](#)
- Reuters, 18 May: [Moody's downgrade over G20 common framework hits Ethiopian bonds](#)

### 3. How Tigray resists

We communicated with friends in Mekelle. They unanimously claim is that perpetrators of the crimes against humanity are Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers. On the other hand, there is also a mix of fear and pity for the young soldiers who are dropped in Mekelle. We received some details about the ways in which people inside Tigray are trying to resist:

A colleague from Mekelle University found one of their former students among the soldiers. The soldier begged for help to escape from Tigray and from the army. People help by giving them civilian clothes.

In common talk in Tigray, the term “ENDF” is not used anymore when talking about the Ethiopian army, they are simply named “PP soldiers”, after Abiy Ahmed’s “Prosperity Party”. The respected naming has been lost. There is no protection for civilians in the Eritrean-ENDF controlled areas... This stands in contrast with Tigray strongholds, according to friends. North of Mekelle, in Sa’isi’e, Atsbi and towards Adigrat, the TDF ([Tigray Defence Forces](#)) have established a strong presence. In these ‘free areas’ (as some people in Mekelle call them), the rule of law has been re-established. Robberies and theft are punished, there is an authority that can handle complaints.

From 25 to 27 May, an inter-religious “Tigray Fasting” (twitter: #TigrayTsom) was organised all over Tigray, with people fasting and praying for peace and humanitarian solutions. Oromo political prisoners even participated in the three days long fasting that has been held by the people of Tigray. The reader may take a 26-minutes (virtual) *bajaj* drive through town, visit the major markets and Mekelle’s hypercentre; all shops were closed, like in a general strike: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ry2KDVg\\_AfM&t=144s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ry2KDVg_AfM&t=144s)

As a reaction to this large civil disobedience, the PP administration tried to forbid shops from re-opening and stopped inter-city transportation: [https://twitter.com/morilla\\_g\\_o\\_a\\_t/status/1397885156585721857](https://twitter.com/morilla_g_o_a_t/status/1397885156585721857) ; [https://twitter.com/HailuKebede\\_/status/1398249919094439943](https://twitter.com/HailuKebede_/status/1398249919094439943)

Unfortunately, media do not much address this widespread resistance of the population:

- Addis Standard, 26 May: [Jawar et al threaten to quit hearing attendance until court decisions are respected; commence two days hunger strike in solidarity with Tigray](#)
- Jamestown Foundation, 24 May: [Tigray Defense Forces Resist Ethiopian Army Offensive as Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethnic Militias Enter the Fray](#)
- RFI, 23 May: [Éthiopie: comment les forces rebelles du Tigré organisent la résistance](#) [in French] – English translation: [Ethiopia: how the Tigray rebel forces organize resistance](#)

#### 4. Tactics to get away with crimes against humanity

As mentioned, pressure on the Ethiopian authorities in relation to these massive war crimes has increased. Hence, they have developed a whole set of diversion tactics.

- Tactic 1: Denial: “it’s a very crazy idea”, “you are on the TPLF payroll”
- Tactic 2: Admit a small crime, say that you are doing something about it, and the World can continue closing its eyes.
- Tactic 3: “This is a dirty war, all are committing crimes”
- Tactic 4: “Human rights concerns is Western imperialism; Ethiopia is not for sale”
- Tactic 5: “Unfortunately, this is the price to pay”

See some articles below, which may be fitted in either of the above categories

- Al Jazeera, 30 May: [Ethiopians denounce US at pro-government rally in Addis Ababa](#)
- The Reporter, 29 May: [The bitter fruits of Tigray war: Eritrea costing Ethiopia](#)
- Fox News, 26 May: [Ethiopia’s Amhara ethnic group accuses Biden of ignoring atrocities](#)
- Bloomberg, 22 May 2021: [Ethiopia Awards New Telecoms License to Vodafone Consortium](#)
- Reuters, 21 May 2021: [Four Ethiopian soldiers convicted of crimes against civilians in Tigray](#)
- Politico, 21 May: [Ethiopia expels journalist who reported on atrocities in Tigray](#)
- AFP, 21 May: [Ethiopia says Eritrean troops killed civilians in Tigray](#)

- New York Times, 20 May: [Ethiopia Expels New York Times Reporter](#)
- Addis Standard, 17 May: [Ethiopia says campaign to exert “undue pressure” against it “regrettable”; push by partners to involve the TPLF in national dialogue “unacceptable”](#)

## 5. Other articles in media

- Bahir Dar news (unpublished): The road to the north is closed. The Amhara Special Forces attacked the Qemant minority group – fighting and houses burnt in and around Gondar (Woleqa, Qusqam).
- CNN, 28 May: [Hundreds of detained Tigrayans released following CNN report](#)
- Radio France internationale, 25 May: [Conflit en Éthiopie: l'inquiétude des habitants d'Alamata, ville du Tigré sous contrôle Amhara](#) [in French]
- The Economist, 22 May: [Eritrea's President Issaias Afwerki bids for regional greatness - But his latest gamble is risky](#)
- The Economist, 22 May: [Eritrea, Africa's gulag state, is on the march](#)
- Sudan Tribune, 22 May: [Egyptian troops arrive in Sudan ahead of bilateral military drills](#)
- The Intercept, 21 May: [Propaganda Machine - Voice of America Is Accused of Ignoring Government Atrocities in Ethiopia](#)
- Nation.Africa, 21 May: [Ethiopian doctor who fled Tigray faces deportation from Kenya](#)
- CNN, 19 May: [Ethiopian soldiers armed with guns and grenades raid hospital featured in CNN report](#)
- South China Morning Post, 18 May: [Ethiopian civil war: Hong Kong pair trek to raise funds for victims, while their neighbours with adopted son from Tigray shield him from the conflict's horrors](#)
- Tghat, 18 May: [After ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans from Western Tigray, Amhara State proceeds to lease and distribute their farmlands to Amhara investors](#)
- Nation.Africa, 17 May: [UN, Ethiopia rights groups to launch joint probe into Tigray abuses](#)
- Addis Fortune, 15 May: [In the absence of inclusive, conclusive national elections](#)

## 6. Opinion pieces

- The Armenian Weekly Staff: [Tigray, the Armenian Genocide and an Open Letter to Pres. Biden](#)
- Bob Menendez & Gregory Meeks: [Ethiopia: The Biden administration must put its foot down](#)
- Goitom Aregawi: [Tigray: Call It Genocide, Prosecute Its Leaders and End It](#)
- Alex de Waal: [It's time for Africa to take a stance against Ethiopia's crimes](#)
- Samuel Ghebhrehwet: [Eritrea viewpoint: I fought for independence but I'm still waiting for freedom](#)
- Opinio Juris: [The Ethio-Eritrean Hunger Plan for Tigray and the Failure of Resolution 2417](#)
- [The Times view on the tragedy in Tigray](#)
- Alex de Waal: [Ethiopia Tigray crisis: Warnings of genocide and famine](#)

## Digest 25.      **Famine! (12 June 2021)**

This circular mainly addresses the famine in Tigray, as now officially confirmed by the UN humanitarian chief (section 1). Hopefully the upgraded version of our Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation will be helpful for the aid workers (section 2). Further, this circular holds a digest of articles in the media (section 3) and opinion pieces (section 4).

### **1. Famine**

Unfortunately, as we [foresaw already back in November](#), there is famine now in Tigray, confirmed by IPC as well as by UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock. It is higher than any famine anywhere in the world since 2011! In different areas of Tigray, a total of 350,000 people are affected by famine. This is actively [denied by the Ethiopian government](#).

However, in a bid to cast a sharp light on the humanitarian emergency in Tigray on the eve of the G7 Summit, a high-level EU-US roundtable was held on 10 June too, for which the IPC report was not to be doubted. Listen to the interventions at the US-EU High-Level Roundtable on the humanitarian emergency in Tigray, by Lowcock and other major speakers who have been following the Tigray crisis from the beginning: <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/us-aid>. Participants were: the US ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US Special envoy to the Horn Jeff Feltman, EU Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen, USAID administrator Samantha Power, UN Humanitarian Chief Mark Lowcock, SecGen Norwegian Refugee Council Jan Egeland, and UN Special representative on Sexual Violence in conflict Pramila Patten.

During this roundtable discussion, Lowcock said that the famine in Tigray is going to get a lot worse. A major problem is that aid workers are often prevented access to the areas where the people most in need of aid are living. The UN has recorded 131 incidents of access violation in May 2021, out of which 50 by Eritrean troops, 54 by Ethiopian troops, 4 jointly by Ethiopians and Eritrean troops, 21 by Amhara Special Forces and militias and 1 by Tigray Defence Forces.

The speakers and in particular, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, USAID administrator Samantha Power and Mark Lowcock, expressed their strong frustration at the inaction of the UNSC. Ireland has again requested that the UNSC discusses Tigray. There are indications that a discussion will take place again on 15 June, although the format of the discussion is not yet known.

UN officially claims that aid distributions have reached 2.8 million people. Privately, [according to Alex De Waal on BBC](#), the humanitarian workers say that is far too rosy. Independent estimates are that just 13% (670,000) of the 5.2 million people in need are getting aid.

Related opinion pieces

- Alex De Waal: [Steal, Burn, Rape, Kill - Alex de Waal on Ethiopia's new famine](#)
- Ewelina Ochab: [Ethiopia On The Brink Of Famine](#)
- [Conversation with Mukesh Kapila](#)

#### Related media articles

- Associated Press, 11 June: [In Tigray, food is often a weapon of war as famine looms](#)
- BBC, 11 June: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: UN aid chief says there is famine](#)
- Reuters, 11 June: [About 350,000 people in Ethiopia's Tigray in famine -U.N. analysis](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 11 June: [UN says 350,000 face famine in Tigray, millions in danger](#)
- ONU Info, 10 June: Tigré : [l'ONU réclame un accès immédiat à la province éthiopienne pour distribuer l'aide alimentaire](#) [in French]
- VRT, 10 June: [VN: "Er is hongersnood in Noord-Ethiopië en het zal nog veel erger worden"](#) [in Dutch]
- BBC, 9 June: [Tigray conflict: 'We have no food, we face death'](#)
- Associated Press, 5 June: [UN: Famine is imminent in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region](#)
- InterAction, 4 June: [InterAction Statement on Looming Threat of Famine in Tigray](#)
- The Telegraph, 4 June: [Starvation 'used as weapon of war' in Ethiopia](#)
- BBC, 4 June: [UN fears repeat of 1984 Ethiopian famine](#)
- VoA, 3 June: [Displaced Families in Ethiopia's Tigray Region Going Hungry](#)
- Devex, 3 June: [US-EU plan meeting to keep spotlight on Ethiopia ahead of G-7](#)

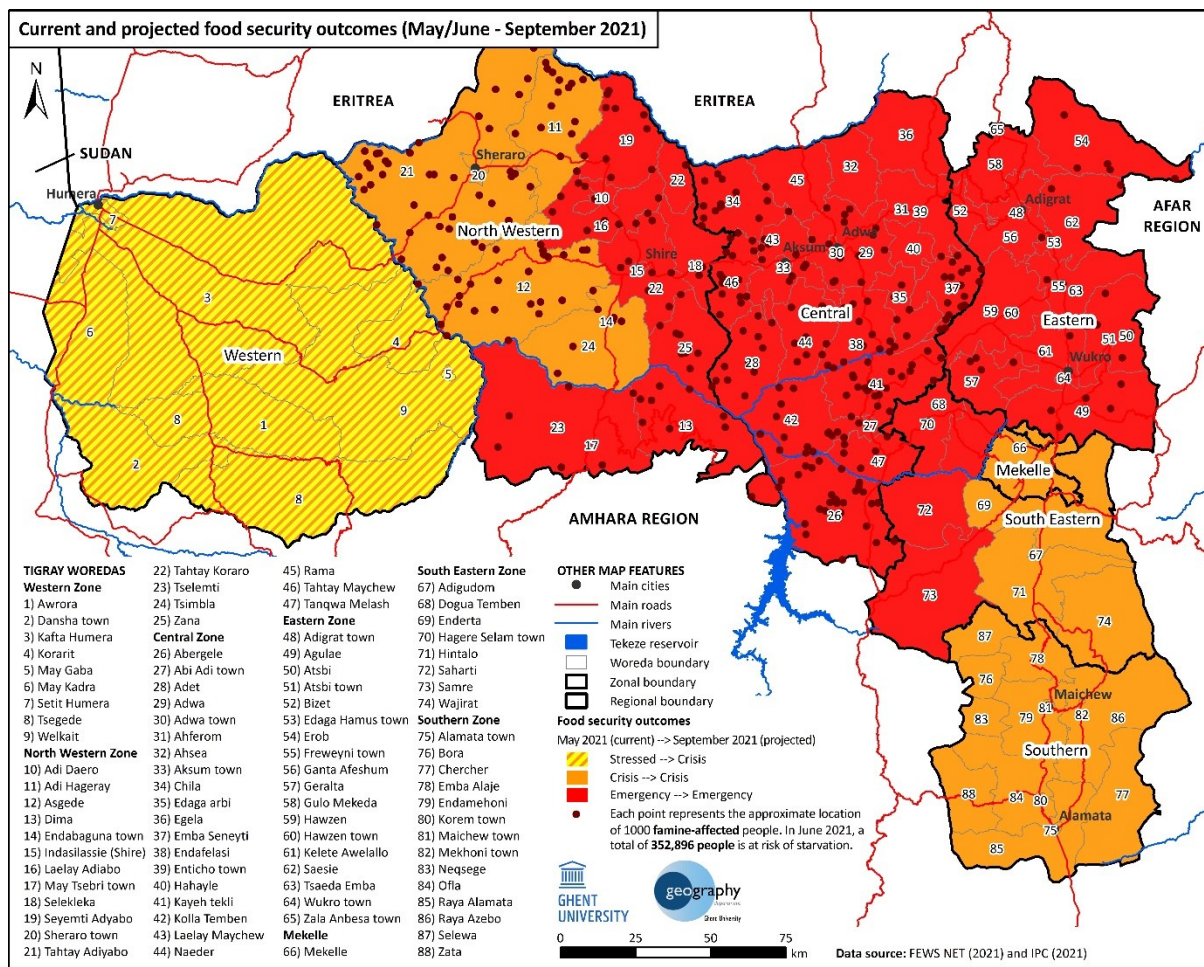
## 2. New edition of the Tigray atlas

An updated version of the "[Tigray: Atlas of the humanitarian situation](#)", was published on 4 June.

Nine maps have been updated (civilian casualties, people in need of food assistance, food aid distribution, displaced people). We published two new maps of Tigray, concerning spring rainfall in February-May 2021 (onset of the growing season!). The worsening food security situation was again updated on 11 June. Where maps have been updated, the corresponding text and references also have been updated.

Here we show the current and projected food security outcomes indicating that food security in the larger part of Tigray has reached an emergency level; and locally, the "catastrophe" level, i.e. famine. Each dot represents 1000 famine-affected people!





### 3. Media

- Aleteia, 10 June: [Ethiopia: 'Genocide is happening in Tigray'](#)
- Reuters, 7 June: [How ethnic killings exploded from an Ethiopian town](#)
- Kerknet, 7 June: [Religie en cultuur onder vuur in Tigray](#) [in Dutch]
- South China Morning Post, 6 June: [Why China is taking a low profile on Ethiopia's Tigray conflict](#)
- Today News Africa, 5 June: [Ethiopian activist pens scathing letter on "BBC's bias on the war in Tigray": They are 'misleading the world by downplaying the atrocities'](#)
- Near East News Agency, 5 June: ["Genocidio nel Tigray"](#) [in Italian] – English translation: ["Genocide in Tigray"](#)
- NPR, 5 June: [Ethiopia To Hold Critical Election Amid Period Of Political Turmoil](#)
- Associated Press, 4 June: [Lost limbs, rising anger as town is caught up in Tigray war](#)
- Associated Press, 4 June: [Tigray rebels tell AP they will fight till victory](#)
- Avvenire, 3 June: [La guerra dimenticata. Etiopia, stupri usati come armi](#) [in Italian]
- Sputnik International, 3 June: [US Comedian Tiffany Haddish Faces Twitter Backlash Over Controversial Support for Eritrean Leader](#)
- Mail and Guardian (South Africa), 2 June: [Voice of America is airing Ethiopian propaganda, staffers claim](#)
- AciAfrica, 2 June: [Catholic Nuns among Rape Victims in Growing Military Brutality in Tigray, Ethiopia](#)

- The Guardian, 2 June: [Calls grow for Ethiopia to declare ceasefire in Tigray to allow aid](#)
- NOS, 31 May: [Jeugd wil wraak na getuigenissen van gruwelijke verkrachtingen in Tigray](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: [Youth seeks revenge after testimonies of horrific rapes in Tigray](#)
- Addis Standard, 31 May: [Keria Ibrahim appears at Fed. high court after prosecutors seek to reinstate charges following her refusal to testify against Sebhat Nega et al.](#)
- AFP, 31 May: [Aid Worker Slain In 'Fire Fight' In Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- NPR, 12 May: [War Crimes Are Suspected In Northern Ethiopia's Conflict Zone](#)
- NPR, 11 May: [Behind The Humanitarian Crisis Caused By The Civil War In Ethiopia](#)

#### 4. Opinion pieces

- Feven Girmay: [Abiy promised Ethiopia's democratization but is delivering its disintegration](#)
- René Lefort: [Les Tigréens sont mis à genoux et dépossédés des moyens de se relever](#) [in French] – English translation: [The Tigrayans are brought to their knees and dispossessed of the means to get up](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [The Nobel committee should resign over the atrocities in Tigray](#)
- Anna Nordén, Kristina Mohlin, Susanna Olai, Thomas Sterner, Sverker Jagers, Johan Boman, Rune Andersson, Christian Munthe: [Sexuella övergrepp och svält används som vapen i Etiopien](#) [in Swedish]
- Abdullahi Boru Halakhe: [The End of Abiy-Mania](#)



## Digest 26.      **Bombing of the Togogwa market (22 June 2021)**

This circular letter addresses the changing military situation in Tigray and the consequences for the humanitarian situation (section 1), the status of land preparation for the next cropping season (section 2), the international investigations of war crimes in Ethiopia (section 3), media (section 4) and opinion articles (section 5).

### **1. Military developments and humanitarian situation in Tigray**

The military situation in Tigray is changing rapidly.

On 19 June, people mentioned more pressure from the soldiers in Mekelle. Suddenly, mobile phones were checked by them. They were looking for photos and videos of Tigray leaders, starving or wounded people. Telephone communication to rural areas such as Tembien also has stopped.

On 21 June, the frontline is not far from Mekelle (near Giba River). Places like Mahbere Dego, Enticho, Abiy Addi, Yechila, Hagere Selam are now again under control of the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF). The government has suddenly restricted flights to Mekelle, has confined travel by foreigners, and has stopped giving permits for aid operations outside the city.

On 22 June, the Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers left Adigrat overnight, and the road between Adigrat and Mekelle seemed under control of the TDF. In the day, Eritrean tanks came in from the north and the very mobile TDF moved out, after having resupplied itself in the army base.

Reports from the TDF are that a force of 15,000 ENDF was destroyed; that the TDF chose to attack the ENDF (Ethiopian army) as a softer target than the EDF; and that a fiercer fight with the EDF is the next prospect. In any case, in many towns in Tigray, the people celebrated and are hoping that the war will soon come to an end. Yet, it is not over, as we were reminded [today] 22 June, when the [Togogwa](#) market in Dogu'a Tembien was bombarded by the Ethiopian Air Force, and 30 civilians killed; ambulances were prevented by ENDF from picking the wounded people.<sup>1</sup>

We are yet to hear how this all affects the humanitarian access and hence the humanitarian response. It is to be reminded that according UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock, there were 131 incidents of access violation in May 2021, out of which one was conducted by the TDF, and the 130 others by ENDF and allies.

### **Related information**

- BBC, 22 June: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: Heavy fighting reported](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Note on 13/6/2024: This Tigray Digest indeed alerted about the bombardment on the very day it occurred; there were also direct contacts with the media about the bombardment of the Togogwa market.

- Bloomberg, 22 June: [Tigray Dissidents Claim Territorial Gains in Ethiopian Civil War](#)
- Somali Guardian, 22 June: [Ethiopia's PM denies reports of hunger in the Tigray region](#)
- RFI, 22 June: [Éthiopie: les soldats érythréens bloquant les routes au Tigré inspirent la terreur](#) [in French]
- Yle, 21 June: ["Pelkäämme, että he tulevat takaisin tappamaan meidät kaikki" – Ylen kuvat näyttävät Tigrayn sodan julmuuden Etiopiassa](#) [in Finnish] – English translation: ["We're afraid they'll come back and kill us all" – Yle's photos show the cruelty of the Tigray war in Ethiopia](#)
- BBC, 21 June: [Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed: 'There is no hunger in Tigray'](#)
- Vice, 18 June: [Ethiopia Denies There's a Famine in Tigray. We Obtained Photos of Starving Children.](#)
- VRT, 18 June: [In Ethiopië dreigt bijna veertig jaar na de hongersnood hetzelfde scenario zich te herhalen](#) [in Dutch]
- L'Osservatore Romano, 15 June 2021: [La carestia incombe sulle popolazioni del Tigray](#) [in Italian, cover page]
- Reuter, 15 June: [UN official accuses Eritrean forces of deliberately starving Tigray](#)
- De Volkskrant, 14 June: [Met 'opzettelijke' honger maken Ethiopië en Eritrea zich in Tigray schuldig aan oorlogsmisdaad](#) [in Dutch]
- Los Angeles Times, 13 June: [Pope demands food aid reach starving people of Tigray](#)
- The Herald, 13 June: [We promised it would never happen again in Ethiopia...but happening again it is](#)
- Black Excellence, 12 June: [The Weeknd Sounds the Alarm on Tigray Famine in Ethiopia](#)

## 2. Land preparation for the next cropping season

Much has been discussed about the challenges for the Tigrayan farmers when they want to plough their land. We did an objective investigation using satellite imagery and telephone interviews, pertaining to the land preparation in April and May. Whereas plantation farms have not been ploughed, most irrigation schemes with smallholder farming are operational, with an overall increase in irrigated land by 6% as compared to 2019-2020. A partial shift from commercial crops to cereals has taken place, which requires less human presence on the fields, and hence involves less risk for the farmers to encounter soldiers and get killed. The same processed Sentinel imagery shows little tillage of rainfed farland in western and NW Tigray, but relatively good ploughing progress in the rest of the region, with often more land ploughed than in 2020, despite less spring rainfall. The situation in western Tigray is particular, as there has been ethnic cleansing of the population and often the 2020 rainfed crops even have not been harvested. Many lands have remained unploughed, and irrigation along the Tekeze River has been abandoned. Overall in Tigray, war conditions have made ploughing very challenging. Oxen have been looted and deliberately killed, and farm inputs and farm tools have been destroyed by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers. Furthermore, farmers who want to plough feel vulnerable out in the open; in many places, Eritrean soldiers forbid the Tigrayan farmers to plough. While trying to produce, in any case, the Tigrayan farmers evaluate all risks involved with ploughing and organise lookouts verifying that no soldiers are approaching. However, there is still hope that a large part of the land will be sown timely, in difficult conditions, with crops that require minimal management, and without fertiliser, as the Tigrayan smallholder farming system, and farmer-led

irrigation schemes are resilient, thanks to the remarkable ability of self-organisation by the local farming communities.

The preprint of the article may be obtained through ResearchGate: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351516150 Ploughing in the Tigray War](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351516150_Ploughing_in_the_Tigray_War)

### Related information

- The changing military conditions make that many farmers will more confidently try to sow in the coming two weeks.
- Reuters, 16 June: [Most farmers in Ethiopia's Tigray are planting crops, says gov't after UN famine warning](#)

### 3. Belgian Federal Prosecutor investigates war crimes in Ethiopia

The Federal Prosecutor's Office of Brussels confirmed on 2 June 2021 that it has opened a file on various war crimes and crimes against humanity in Tigray, Ethiopia. Several Belgian victims of the war in northern Ethiopia had submitted testimonies to the Prosecutor's Office. Their relatives were executed and properties looted.

Thousands of civilians have been killed by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops. Human rights organisations have observed ethnic persecutions, torture and mass executions. The Ethiopian army's aggression against the Tigray minority has further increased in recent months. Gang rape is still widely used as a weapon of war. The United Nations also accuse the Ethiopian regime of deliberately delaying food aid to the region.

The Union of Tigrayans in Belgium supports the complaint of the Belgian-Tigrayan war victims. Five relatives of victims asked the Federal Prosecutor to conduct an independent investigation into the war criminals within the Ethiopian and Eritrean regimes. It is possible in Belgium to prosecute crimes against humanity, even if they did not take place in Belgium, on the condition that some of the victims are Belgian.

Noteworthy, Ethiopia does not recognise the International Criminal Court. The investigation by the Federal Prosecutor's Office would be the first to lead to a trial for crimes against humanity by members of the regime of Abiy Ahmed.

Contact: Gebrehiwot Abera, Union of Tigrayans in Belgium ([warcrimetigray@gmail.com](mailto:warcrimetigray@gmail.com))

### Related information

- Nation, 17 June: [AU launches investigation into Tigray atrocities](#)

- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 15 June: [Press Statement on the official launch of the Commission of Inquiry on the Tigray Region in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia](#)
- Le Soir, 14 June: [Ethiopie: au Tigré, la famine annoncée et préparée par la guerre menace 350.000 personnes; Un dossier pour crimes de guerre a été déposé auprès du Procureur fédéral belge](#) [in French] – English translation: [A case for war crimes has been filed with the Belgian Federal Prosecutor](#)
- MSF, 8 June: [We can do better than complete impunity for Tigray's destroyed health system](#)

#### 4. In the media

- Bloomberg, 22 June: [Civil War Hardens Ethiopian Nile-Dam Stance, Sudan Minister Says](#)
- New York Times, 21 June: [He Promised Peace. Then He Tore His Country Apart](#)
- Libération, 21 June: [Interview René Lefort «En Ethiopie, les élections ne seront ni libres ni transparentes ni inclusives»](#) [in French]
- RFI, 21 June: [Éthiopie: un scrutin à deux vitesses entre les régions et Addis-Abeba](#) [in French]
- Le Monde, 21 June: [Jour de vote en Ethiopie : « Nous sommes là, pour choisir un gouvernement fort, capable de rétablir la paix »](#) [in French]
- CNN, 21 June: [Voting underway in Ethiopia amid conflict and a raging humanitarian crisis](#)
- US Department of Justice, 21 June: [Naturalized U.S. Citizen from Ethiopia Arrested on Charge of Fraudulently Obtaining Citizenship - Failure to Disclose Participation in Persecution During the Ethiopian Red Terror](#)
- France24, 21 June: [Ethiopia elections: PM Abiy Ahmed faces first vote amid conflict](#)
- Trouw, 20 June: [Ethiopische 'vrije' verkiezingen in troebel water](#) [in Dutch]
- NOS, 19 June: [Deze oorlog mag je niet zien](#) [in Dutch]
- AP, 18 June: [EU envoy: Ethiopian leadership vowed to 'wipe out' Tigrayans](#)
- Devex, 18 June: [EU teases Ethiopia aid plans amid budget support freeze](#)
- The National News, 17 June: [US congressman Michael McCaul raises spectre of 'genocide' in Tigray](#)
- Facebook Head of Security Policy, 16 June: [Removing Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior From Ethiopia](#)
- Bloomberg, 15 June: [Arab Ministers Urge UN Security Council to Discuss Nile Dam](#)
- The Jerusalem Post, 15 June: [How do Egypt, Ethiopia stack up, militarily?](#) (Note: figures quoted pertain to the period before the Tigray War)
- University of Twente, 15 June: ['I hope I can go back and help rebuild Tigray'](#)
- VOA, 15 June: [UN: Deaths From Starvation Reported in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 15 June: [Ethiopia U.N. envoy says Eritrea troops to leave Tigray 'soon'](#)
- The Time, 12 June: [Dissenters tortured in 'North Korea of Africa'](#)
- Politico, 12 June: [Ethiopia tries to pre-empt G7 criticism over Tigray](#)
- Belfast Telegraph, 12 June: [Thousands protest over climate change, Ethiopia and Myanmar at G7 summit](#)
- IPS, 11 June: [Global Leaders to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed: Stop the Atrocities in Tigray](#)
- AP, 11 June: [In Tigray, food is often a weapon of war as famine looms](#)
- Reuters, 11 June: [UN official accuses Eritrean forces of deliberately starving Tigray](#)

- AFP, 11 June: [Fabricated statement falsely claims Japan will support Ethiopia over US visa restrictions](#)
- Africa confidential, 10 June: [Muddled meddling by the UAE](#)

## 5. Opinion articles

- Hillary Matfess: [Sexual Violence and the War in Tigray](#)
- Zeinab Mohammed Salih: [‘Don’t betray women of Tigray’: calls grow for international action against rape in war](#)
- Anna Nordén, Kristina Mohlin, Susanna Olai, Thomas Sterner, Sverker Jagers, Johan Boman, Rune Andersson, Christian Munthe: [Sexual abuse and starvation are used as weapons in Ethiopia](#)
- Jan Nyssen and colleagues: [From Apologies to Atrocities: How to make sense of leadership statements in Ethiopia](#)
- Jan Nyssen: [Les narratifs justifiant le viol comme arme de guerre au Tigray](#) [in French]
- The Guardian view on famine in Ethiopia: [Food must not be a weapon](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Tigray: Fears of Escalating Violations](#)
- African Studies Association: [ASA Condemns the Destruction of Educational Institutions in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia](#)
- Nicholas Kristof (NYT): [Don’t Turn Away From These Images and These Crimes](#)
- Mohammed Girma: [Ethiopia’s election: the stakes are high amid fear, mistrust and violence](#)

## Digest 27.      **Mekelle is liberated (29 June 2021)**

We all feel cautiously relieved, now that Mekelle and most of Tigray have been liberated (section 1). At least the people can breathe, the farmers can work on their land, but numerous challenges remain. This is a victory of all the people of Tigray: the peaceful resistance to protect Mekelle's Ayder Hospital (section 2), the numerous people who took big risks to transmit information for the [Atlas of the Humanitarian situation in Tigray](#) and [newsletters](#), and to international media, and the many who gave their times and resources to help fellow Tigrayans more affected than themselves. Reconstruction works need to start now, and for sake of efficiency there should be direct passenger flights between Mekelle and the outer world (section 3). Last but not least, if not yet done, I hint to different ways of helping the people of Tigray in this reconstruction (section 4).

### **1. Mekelle has been liberated**

The big news is of course that on 28 June Mekelle and several other towns (Alamata, Adwa or Shire) have been liberated. ENDF and EDF troops have surrendered massively, although Eritrean troops are still in border areas such as Irob, where they have gathered on top of the Ma-abino hill. As we write, Amhara militias are also in disarray in Western Tigray.

But it is not over yet. There is famine, there are nearly two million displaced people, women have been raped, much infrastructure was looted and destroyed, people are mourning their beloved ones who were massacred. Yesterday's CNN report is quite eloquent:

<https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2021/06/28/lead-nima-elbagir-dnt-live-jake-tapper.cnn>

### **2. The Bravest Protest I Ever Saw in Mekelle**

(Report by Dr Tony Magaña, USA)

"Today has been a mixture of sadness and joy. For sometime I have wanted to tell the story of what I think was the most heroic thing I have ever seen in my life, which was the unarmed defense of Ayder Comprehensive Specialized Hospital in Mekelle. Now that Mekelle is free it is important to tell it.

On November 26 and for the next few days in Mekelle, there were Ethiopian and Eritrean forces looting, shooting, robbing, and harassing civilians all around the Ayder area, where I lived and the hospital is located. The hospital was occupied by Ethiopian army regulars, then by Special Forces from Oromia, and the so-called Federal Police. Then suddenly for about half a day they disappeared.

Rumors were flying in the city that Eritreans were ransacking public utilities, schools, etc. The local population of civilians began to put tires, logs, and stones around Ayder Comprehensive Specialized

Hospital, the main teaching and tertiary hospital for Tigray, fearing that the hospital which was highly valued by the city would be destroyed or looted.

Special Red caped soldiers showed up and began harassing the locals more and more. The locals did not back off. They gathered by the thousands and began to surround the hospital 24 hours a day. Many times semitrucks and smaller trucks driven by Eritreans which were empty tried to make it to the hospital to loot it.”

“At one point a group of young men were shouting about ten feet ahead of me to the soldiers. Suddenly the soldiers fired at them, killing one person and injuring two others. At that time, there were tires burning all around the hospital with thousands of protesters. The soldiers were scared and I feared the worst was going to happen. It was tense until the morning. Finally the lined up trucks were told to leave.

Pictures I had of the event were erased by Eritrean patrols that would search me everyday I went to the hospital, but I will never forget the bravery of the people in Mekelle who unarmedly defended their hospital.”

### **3. Personal request to the Tigray Regional Government**

I have a personal request to the Tigray authorities, that many of you may share. We know that the Regional Government has lots of issues to handle now, including “mopping up” hostile forces (to use Abiy Ahmed’s terminology), securing borders, get the society working again, get compensations for all the damage done... I have an additional personal request to the Tigray authorities: please organise direct passenger flights between Mekelle Alula Aba Nega airport and some major international airports! There are many people all over the world who wish to come and help to rebuild Tigray!

### **4. How can I help the reconstruction of Tigray, how can I send money to help the Tigrayan farming communities?**

- Discuss on the setup of academic projects, and contact colleagues at Mekelle University, Aksum University, Adigrat University or Raya University. Telephone and internet connections have been interrupted, but hopefully it should only be a matter of days before these are re-established, at least for Mekelle
- Prepare humanitarian projects, see international NGOs, or major NGOs in your country, or contact the Relief Society of Tigray.
- Directly send aid to rural communities in Tigray, see this fundraising set up by EthioTrees: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/food-for-farmers-in-tembien>

## 5. In the media

(most recent developments not included; Dr Google may help you!)

- UNICEF: [Nutrition crisis grips families in Tigray](#)
- CNN, 29 June: [New video of Ethiopia massacre shows soldiers passing phone around to document their executions of unarmed men](#)
- Der Spiegel, 28 June: [Das Grauen der Frauen von Tigray](#) [in German]
- Frankfurter Rundschau, 27 June: [Mitglied der Tigray-Rebellen: „Wir sind der Sündenbock“](#) [in German]
- Associated Press, 27 June: [‘Like a hell’: Ethiopia airstrike survivors recall massacre](#)
- La Repubblica, 26 June: [I medici italiani nel Tigray: “Uccidono anche i ragazzi”](#) [in Italian]
- Vox, 25 June: [Ethiopia is facing a human-made famine](#)
- Médiapart, 24 June: [Éthiopie : le double jeu de la France](#) [in French]
- Today News Africa, 24 June: [Human Rights Watch asks Biden to hold war criminals in Ethiopia’s Tigray region accountable and back International Criminal Court](#)
- CNN, 24 June: [Condemnation builds over deadly government airstrike in Tigray](#)
- Bellingcat, 24 June: [Tigray Conflict: Videos Provide New Details of Mahbere Dego Massacre](#)
- Tessa Knight, Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), 23 June: [Eritrean report uses fact-checking tropes to dismiss evidence as “disinformation”](#)
- La Repubblica, 23 June: [Tigray, i ribelli all'attacco contro l'esercito di Addis Abeba](#) [in Italian]

## 6. Opinion pieces

- Meron Gebreananaye: [“Hands Off Ethiopia”: A new phase in the Tigray disinformation campaign](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Tigray crisis: Ethiopian region 'a vast death trap' - Tigray’s skies should be open for humanitarian flights only](#)
- Greg Mills: [The Plough and the Kalashnikov: Ethiopia after the election](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Eritrea’s final war?](#)
- Democracy Now: [A Political Solution Is the Only Way: Crisis Escalates in Ethiopia Amid War, Famine & Elections](#)
- Alex De Waal: [New Realities in Ethiopia](#)

Next time in Hagere Selam, let me invite you for a [siwa \(local beer\)](#)!



## Digest 28.      **Starving Tigray is Abiy's new strategy<sup>2</sup> (9 July 2021)**

First of all it should be reminded that since 28 June, Tigray has been cut off from the world: no telephone, no internet, we don't have contact to our friends and relatives. Ted Galt (<https://twitter.com/Quen10Tarantino/status/1412851384895119363/photo/1>) processed night-time satellite imagery showing that power is back partially in Mekele and Aksum, but everywhere else in Tigray is still without power since 28th June.

Tigray is making headlines, for sake of the humanitarian disaster and possible ways out. Impossible for us to continue highlighting every article as we did before.... So we'll try to reorient the Tigray digests a little, highlighting some news and publications that may otherwise stay under the radar, such as the interview of the spanish priest Angel Olan (section 1), a documentary film released just before the war "the End of Famine" (section 2), the updated maps of the Tigray Atlas (section 3), a new report on the Tigray War and Regional Implications (section 4), and some selected media articles (section 5) and opinion pieces (section 6).

### **1. Wukro's Father Angel speaks out**

El Mundo is Spain's second-largest newspaper. On 3 July, it published a tree-pages report featuring Father Angel, missionary in Wukro (a.k.a. Abba Melaku): [El misionero español Ángel Olan Tigray en el corazón: "Hay masacres, violaciones masivas, saqueos... hasta han robado el material médico de los hospitales..." Es la tragedia silenciada del norte de Etiopía, donde acaba de ser asesinada María, cooperante española de Médicos sin Fronteras. El sacerdote arroja luz sobre el cerrojo informativo: "Han matado a uno de nuestros niños. Un balazo"](#) [in Spanish] – **Translation** of the header: The Spanish missionary Ángel Olan - Tigray in his heart: "There are massacres, mass rapes, looting... they have even stolen medical supplies from hospitals..." It is the silenced tragedy of northern Ethiopia, where Maria, a Spanish aid worker for Médecins Sans Frontières, has just been murdered. The priest sheds light on the information blockade: "They have killed one of our children. A bullet"

Abba Melaku mostly lives in Wukro (Tigray) where he is well known - even if you do not read Spanish, you will be happy to open the article...

### **2. By 2019, the topic was 'The End of Famine' in Tigray...**

2019 film, "The End of Famine" (UNCCD), by Patrick Augenstein, largely filmed in Tigray (Dogu'a Tembien) and in WFP premises.

[The End of Famine - Trailer](#)

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<sup>2</sup> This title is a direct translation of a news article title in which I was interviewed at the time: Knack, 6 July 2021: ["Tigray uithongeren is de nieuwe strategie van Abiy"](#) [in Dutch] ([Starving Tigray is Abiy's new strategy](#))

[The End of Famine \(10 min\)](#)

[The End of Famine \(35 min\)](#)

### **3. Update of the Tigray atlas, incorporating the recent changes of the situation on the ground**

A new version of the Tigray Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation has been published on 8 July: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181 Tigray Atlas of the humanitarian situation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181_Tigray_Atlas_of_the_humanitarian_situation). Several sections and maps of this Atlas have been updated to represent ground conditions that have (sometimes dramatically) changed.

- Conflict incidents
- Territorial control
- Fully documented casualties
- Reported casualties and occurrence of massacres; update of Annexes A (list of massacres) and B (monthly casualties)
- Internally Displaced People
- Internal migration
- Banking and telecommunication services
- Food security outcomes: 400,000 people are now affected by famine (map will be updated in the next edition)

### **4. New report: The Tigray War and Regional Implications**

Eritrea Focus & Oslo Analytica: [The Tigray War and Regional Implications](#)

- Martin Plaut: Introduction: war, offensives and atrocities
- Anthony Shaw: Ethiopia at war
- Ermias Teka: Progress of the war
- The Ethiopian national context
- Habte Hagos & Martin Plaut: Diplomatic Efforts
- Felicity Mulford: The Humanitarian Situation: Aid, Food Security and Famine
- Mike Slotznick: The plight of Eritrean refugees
- Sally Keeble: Sexual violence in the Tigray conflict
- Anthony Shaw: The destruction of Tigray's world important cultural heritage

### **5. Other media articles**

- Libération, 29 June: [«Alula», l'opération militaire qui a soudain fait basculer la guerre au Tigré](#) [in French]
- The Guardian, 30 June: [The looming famine in Tigray is an avoidable catastrophe](#)
- CBS, 2 July: ["Tragedies of historic proportions": U.N. confronts Ethiopia as famine grips Tigray region](#)

- Frankfurter Rundschau, 5 July: [Opfer des Tigray-Konflikts: An Körper und Seele schwer verletzt](#) [in German]
- The Guardian, 5 July: [Captured Ethiopian government soldiers reach Tigray capital – in pictures](#)
- Miami Herald, 6 July: [UN says humanitarian crisis in Tigray region of Ethiopia improving as more aid gets in](#) [Note: this is about humanitarian access **within** Tigray]
- Christianity Today, 6 July: [Ethiopian Christians Take Sides Over Tigray Crisis](#) [This article gives an insight in the contradictions within Evangelicals/Pentecostals in Ethiopia – the term “Christianity” in the title points only to these denominations]
- Knack, 7 July: [Burgeroorlog Ethiopië: 'Tigray uithongeren is de nieuwe strategie van Abiy'](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: ‘[Starving Tigray is Abiy’s new strategy](#)’
- Voice of America, 7 July: [Hundreds of Women, Girls Brutalized by Soldiers in Tigray War](#)
- Addis Standard, 8 July: [Ethiopia recalls dozens of diplomats, closes consulates in various countries](#)
- Bloomberg, 9 July: [Giant Dam Is Messing Up Water in Africa Even Before It Is Filled](#)
- Addis Standard, 9 July: [World Food Program trucks en route to Mekelle and Semera forced to return from North Wollo](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 9 July: [UN Rights Body Needs to Act on Ethiopia - Human Rights Council Should Adopt Resolution on Abuses in Tigray](#)
- 

## 6. Opinion pieces

- Lucy Kassa: [Death threats and sleepless nights: The emotional toll of reporting Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict](#)
- Richard Atwood (International Crisis Group): [Resurgent Tigray and Horn of Africa Politics](#)
- Awet Weldemichael, Elleni Centime Zeleke, Safia Aidid and David Webster: [Canada and the Atrocities in Tigray, Ethiopia: Scholars Respond to Policy Options](#)
- Alex De Waal: [De-escalating the War in Ethiopia: Start with the Rhetoric](#)
- Lyla Mehta: [War and famine: history repeating itself in Tigray](#)
- George Monbiot: [The erosion of memory](#)

## Digest 29. **Despite the blockade, crops have been sown, but lately (23 July 2021)**

This 29<sup>th</sup> digest focuses on some news from Tigray despite the near-total blackout (section 1), the situation at Mekelle University (section 2), the dire conditions of Western Tigray (section 3). We use the German case, as an example to mention the diplomatic efforts (section 4), and further include links to some major press articles (section 5) and opinion pieces (section 6).

### 1. Situation in Tigray

There is limited information coming out of Tigray. The general feeling is that, though we could rarely talk to our friends and relatives since 28 June, they are relatively safe now, with no more warfare in most of Tigray, and no more killing, looting and raping soldiers around. We managed to get limited information through a few satellite telephone communications, and the following would be the general situation.

- **Humanitarian aid:** There is a very dire humanitarian situation due to the total blockade of Tigray. There is no humanitarian corridor yet and the federal government “is doing everything to worsen the case”. This is confirmed by [the latest OCHA map](#) that shows a good accessibility within Tigray, but all borders closed due to blocking by ENDF and Amhara militias. Only one convoy, carrying 1000 tonnes has arrived since 28 June. The dire situation is well summarised in [OCHA’s Daily Noon Briefing Highlights – 21 July 2021](#).
- **Agriculture:** many crops of the main rainy season (*belgi*) have been sown; farmers still have time to sow tef until the beginning of August
- **Internally displaced persons:** internal refugees have started returning home, or at least some villagers return to assess the situation, except for those who came from Western Tigray, which is still occupied by Amhara militias. A package is being worked out to allow the IDPs to travel home with some assets. The Tigray Bureau of Agriculture is handling it.
- **Banks:** Despite being formally closed by the Ethiopian National Bank, bank agencies have opened, particularly in Mekelle and Shire, but only limited withdrawals (2000 ETB, about 40 €) are possible.
- **Telephone:** There are no communications possible. Technicians try to restore the internal communication within Tigray.
- **Electricity:** Electricity has come back in Mekelle and other towns. The power is generated by the Tekeze hydropower dam. Due to near-absence of power generation during the war, the reservoir of the Tekeze dam is however nearly full, though we are only in the first half of the rainy season. Emergency releases need to take place, and during these releases no power can be produced – for the technicalities see [this paper by UGent and Mekelle University](#): section 4.3 is specifically about the Tekeze dam operation.
- **Education:** the Tigray Bureau of Education aims at opening schools by September
- **Bridges:** after TDF has taken control of May Tsebri, the Imbamadre bridge across Tekeze River is under rehabilitation

Related press articles:

- Millete Birhanemaskel: [After months of agony, my family in Tigray called, but they aren't safe yet](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 12 July: [Aid access to Tigray remains stalled, despite ceasefire](#)
- FAO, 13 July: [Window for planting in northern Ethiopia narrows as hunger catastrophe looms](#)
- UN News, 13 July: [UN appeals for faster passage for aid convoys to Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Associated Press (video), 14 July: [Jubilation in Tigray as TDF moves in](#)
- [World Food Programme, 22 July: WFP sends first humanitarian passenger flight into Tigray, as famine edges closer in the region](#)
- Nation (Kenya), 22 July: [UN aid workers allege delays, harassment from Ethiopian officials before Tigray flight](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 22 July: [Aid neutrality under fire in Ethiopia's widening conflict](#)

## **2. Alarming situation at Mekelle University, Tigray, Ethiopia**

Yesterday, I received a rare and short email from one of our alumni, now dean at Mekelle University (MU), sending greetings to all friends. There were also communications from Prof. Kindeya, previous president of Mekelle University.

In a press release, the MU President Office states the dire situation of the university, since Tigray has been sealed off from the outside world by the Ethiopian authorities on 28 June 2021. There is no banking, telecom, and government funds for the universities in Tigray are not transferred.

MU's bank accounts have been blocked. They couldn't pay the salaries for their 7500 employees for the month of June. And anticipated also not in July. In Ethiopia, university students commonly take their meals in the students' cafeteria, but MU ran out of stock to feed the 10,000 students who are present.

Though Mekelle University is peaceful now, many students from other regions wanted to return home as they could not communicate with their families through phone or email, or feared for hunger. MU worked with the UN and the Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MOSHE) to organise the travel home of these students. MU did its part and organised buses for the students, as the MOSHE representatives were absent at the Tigray border where the "transfer" was expected to take place, the students travelled back to Mekelle.

The Ethiopian federal government thus blocks the funding of Tigray's universities, which are federal institutions, whilst other universities do not face this problem. This undermines the foundations of higher education in Ethiopia and may make international university partners reconsider whether cooperation is sustainable under such circumstances.

Related press article:

- Deutsche Welle (in Amharic) [reports Mekelle University students safe but telecom blackout & banks closure making life difficult](#)

### 3. Massacres at Humera – situation in Western Tigray

We received information on Western Tigray through people who managed to escape to the Hamdayet refugee camp in Sudan and talked to their relatives. Not much additional information is available for the moment, people are afraid to talk. The Amhara authorities and *fano* militia which still control the zone force the people to hold “anti-woyane” demonstrations.

The remaining Tigrayans are mostly not allowed to use telephone. Triangulation is done with people in Humera using text messages. The following is confirmed from these different sources:

- People continue to flee to the refugee camps in Sudan.
- Mass arrest of Tigrayans (mainly the men) continues, all police stations are full, and private trading and farming stores are used as concentration camps. “Warka Trading” and “Temesgen Zegeye” stores are among the biggest active concentration camps. Part of these detained civilians have been sent to Eritrea on two lorries.
- It is common that remaining women are gang-raped in their house.
- A woman, Feven Berhe, had her eyes removed before she was killed. The reported reason for her killing was for having a Tigray flag in her house. Locals suspect however she might have refused to have sex with Amhara militiamen.
- A man and his wife (names intentionally avoided) were beheaded, others had their stomach opened and were then thrown to the Tekeze River.
- Downstream, across the border, in Sudan, dead bodies are observed floating on the Tekeze River

Articles on the situation in Humera and Western Tigray

- AFP, 14 July 2021: [‘Survival struggle’: Ethnic standoff drives new phase of Tigray war](#)
- Dereje T. Asefa: [The Tigray-Amhara Boundary Should be Resolved by Constitutional Means](#)

### 4. Sanctions & understanding diplomacy

The Ethiopian Minister of Peace visited Germany and the UK. Diplomatic statements were made, and sometimes it is difficult to see what is behind the jargon.

Ministry of Peace (Twitter: [@MoP\\_Ethiopia](#)): “During her official visit to Germany and the UK, HE Peace Minister Muferihat Kamil briefed State Secretary Miguel Berger of Germany and Minister for Africa James Duddridge of the UK on the current situation in Ethiopia. HE the Minister explained the rationale behind the declaration of a unilateral humanitarian ceasefire by the Ethiopian Government; the

national dialogue being undertaken throughout the country and national development activities underway. HE Muferihat Kamil also called upon the international community to condemn TPLF's orchestrated misinformation/disinformation campaign and multifaceted destruction."

Colleague Patrick Heinisch contacted the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development about this recent meeting with Ethiopian government representatives. Spokesperson of the Ministry confirmed that: (1) Germany acts in line with EU and currently withholds €100m of "reform financing" to Ethiopia; (2) disbursement depends on steps taken by the Ethiopian government to resolve the Tigray crisis and investigations of infringements against human rights; (3) Germany demands immediate ceasefire and a political process to overcome the Tigray conflict; (4) humanitarian cooperation goes on.

Full text of the communication by the German Ministry [in German] can be found here: <https://twitter.com/PatrickHeinisc1/status/1417766489738862592>

The EU Special Envoy for the Horn, Annette Weber travelled to Addis Ababa in the last week. She was received by vice PM Mekonnen even though apparently she expected to meet PM Abiy. The same 'disconnect' was apparent in what was reported on the Ethiopian side and the EU side.

The situation in Tigray was discussed at the [47th meeting of the UN Council for Human Rights](#): "The Council requested the High Commissioner to present an oral update to the Human Rights Council at its forty-eighth session during an enhanced interactive dialogue. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 20 in favour, 14 against and 13 abstentions." High commissioner Bachelet will have to say something about the joint investigation (EHRC-OHCRC) of the massacres in Tigray. It's likely to remain on the Council's agenda.

## 5. Other press articles

- CBC News, 10 July: [As allies accuse Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed of atrocities in Tigray, Canada stands back](#)
- The New York Times, 11 July: [How Local Guerrilla Fighters Routed Ethiopia's Powerful Army](#)
- Reporters Without Borders, 12 July: [RSF decries wave of arrests in Ethiopia](#)
- Associated Press, 13 July: ['Purely ethnic profiling': New wave of Tigrayans detained](#)
- Aljazeera, 14 July: [Fear pervades as Tigrayans rounded up after battlefield reversals](#)
- African Business, 16 July: [Ethiopia's outlook turns sour as war rages on](#)
- Le Monde, 16 July: [En Ethiopie, mobilisation générale des Amhara face aux rebelles du Tigré](#) [in French]
- RFI, 16 July: [Éthiopie: les autorités suspendent un média réputé, dans un climat tendu](#) [in French]
- BBC, 16 July: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: Fleeing for fear of new ethnic conflict](#)
- Aljazeera, 17 July: [How the conflict in Tigray is fraying Ethiopia's finances](#)
- VoA, 17 July: [Ethiopia Warns News Outlets Not to 'Mischaracterize' Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 17 July: [Ethiopia's Tigray Forces Say They Freed 1,000 Captured Soldiers](#)

- Leigh Day, 19 July: [Tigrayan group in UK raises serious concerns about CDC investment in Ethiopia telecoms](#)
- Christian Science Monitor, 19 July: [When a Nobel Peace Prize winner wages war, who loses?](#)
- The Times, 19 July: [Genocide fears after Ethiopian PM vows to crush ‘weeds’ of Tigray](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 20 July: [Ethiopia: Fear Tigray conflict could trigger all-out war](#)
- Government of the Netherlands, 22 July: [The UN has a clear message: what is happening in Ethiopia is unacceptable](#)
- BBC, 22 July: [Ethiopia Tigray crisis: New front opens in war as aid fears grow](#)
- Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 23 July: [Vor wenigen Monaten schienen die Rebellen in Tigray besiegt, nun drohen sie Addis Abeba die Versorgung abzuschneiden. Wie ist das möglich?](#) [In German] – [English translation](#): A few months ago, the rebels in Tigray seemed defeated, now they are threatening to cut off supplies to Addis Ababa. How is this possible?
- Trouw, 23 July: [Burgeroorlog in Tigray breidt zich uit naar andere deelstaten](#) [in Dutch]

## 6. Opinion pieces

- Amnesty International: [Ethiopia: End arbitrary detentions of Tigrayans, activists and journalists in Addis Ababa and reveal whereabouts of unaccounted detainees](#)
- Teferi Mergo: [Ethiopia’s Problems Stem From Internal Colonialism](#)
- Delia Burns: [Tigray: Time for the UN to Report on Attacks on Humanitarian Facilities and Personnel](#)
- International Federation of Journalists: [Ethiopia: Relentless crackdown on journalists covering military conflict](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Kriget som kan fälla Eritreas diktator](#) [in Swedish]
- Alex Dewaal: [July 2021 Employee of the Month: Abiy Ahmed](#)



## **Digest 30.        Like all institutions in the region, Tigray's universities are in survival modus (8 August 2021)**

This Tigray digest holds an update on Tigray's universities (section 1), yesterday's briefs published by the Government of Tigray (section 2), and a link to the latest FewsNet report (section 3). There are also links to press articles (section 4), particularly related to the humanitarian situation and aid that continues only to trickle into Tigray, mass killings along Tekeze river, and the evolving military situation. Unfortunately, no ceasefire talks so far. We end with a set of links to opinion pieces on the situation in Tigray and in Ethiopia (section 5).

### **1. Update on the status of the universities in Tigray**

Except for its' Western zone, Tigray is now fully controlled by the elected regional government. At Tigray's four universities the immediate stress of war and human rights abuse has been relaxed, but new challenges occurred, as the universities' budgets have been cut, as well as all external communication lines. The universities are in 'survival mode'.

- Due to frequent interruption of classes, students returned home without any considerable progress for the academic year 2020-2021. Most colleges didn't even cover half a semester.
- These universities now have their bank accounts closed and their budget was not released.
- Staff members of these universities didn't receive salaries since June 2021. Mekelle University alone has about 7500 employees.
- As the Tigray region is under a complete siege all basic services have ground to a halt, and so are the universities in the region. Mekelle University, in a press release dated 20 July 2021, announced that the university has run out of stocks to feed about 10,000 students present on its campuses.
- The Federal Government and humanitarian organisations like ICRC should collaborate in providing the universities with access to cash and food for their students.
- The Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development need to release the universities' budgets and unblock the bank accounts.
- Early 2021, when controlling Mekelle, the Ethiopian government had called all students to travel back to the universities in Tigray, in order to present a face of normality. Even international PhD students (from Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya,...) were called back. Just like all inhabitants of Tigray these students now suffer from the consequences of the blockade and want to travel home.
- Raya University students left campus when the federal forces left the area. Mekelle, Aksum, and Adigrat universities are transporting non-Tigrayan students home, with the support of UN and Tigray Government.
- The universities and the region are however short of fuel and cash to transport these students to their place of origin. The government of Ethiopia and ICRC must facilitate the transfer of these students across regional borders .
- The universities, the Tigray government, and the population of Tigray have to ensure the safety of these students until sufficient resources are available or their travel is arranged. They have committed themselves to this.

- It is likely that these non-Tigrayan students will continue their studies in one of the many universities countrywide. However, in various places in Ethiopia, Tigrayan students are left without any possibility to travel to the four Tigray universities due to the ongoing complete siege.

## 2. Tigray Government briefs

The Tigray government published two documents with factual information, that may not have reached the international community due to the ongoing blockade.

Press release by the Government of the National State of Tigray, 7 August 2021. (concerns mainly the protection of cultural heritage). <https://twitter.com/johniabraha/status/1424140352361992192>

Weekly brief of the Tigray External Affairs office, 7 August 2021. (concerns mainly the humanitarian situation). [https://twitter.com/hayet\\_alem/status/1423995905385062403](https://twitter.com/hayet_alem/status/1423995905385062403)

## 3. FewsNet report: extreme food insecurity in Tigray

The latest FewsNet report particularly stresses the food insecurity. There are many detailed maps in this report, including an NDVI-based status of vegetation, which confirms poor crop stands in Western Tigray.

FewsNet, June 2021: [Conflict likely to drive extreme food insecurity in Tigray through at least January 2022](#)

## 4. Press articles

- Egypt Independent, 21 July: [Addis Ababa failed to fill GERD reservoir: researcher](#)
- AccessNow, 29 July: [What's happening in Tigray? Internet shutdowns avert accountability](#)
- New York Times, 29 July: [This Ethiopian Road Is a Lifeline for Millions. Now It's Blocked](#)
- Reuters, 30 July: [U.S. aid chief to travel to Ethiopia in diplomatic push on Tigray](#)
- The Economist, 31 July: [In Ethiopia's civil war, Tigrayan forces take the offensive](#)
- BBC World service Newshour, 1 August: [Senior TDF commander: "We had no choice"](#) (podcast)
- AFP, 1 August: [Ethiopian Airlines denies shipping arms, soldiers to Tigray](#)
- Associated Press, 2 August: [Bodies found in river between Ethiopia's Tigray and Sudan](#)
- PBS News hour, 3 August: [Ethiopian government appears determined to target Tigray as humanitarian crisis deepens](#)
- AFP, 3 August: [UN condemns 'dangerous' claims of bias against aid workers in Tigray](#)
- AFP, 4 August: [Aid groups in Tigray suspended for 'misinformation': Ethiopia](#)

- FLASHBACK – New York Times, 4 December 1985: [EXPULSED DOCTORS ACCUSE ETHIOPIA](#)
- Der Spiegel, 4 August: [Wie die Regierung Hunger als Waffe einsetzt](#) [in German]
- AFP, 4 August: [Only 10% of needed aid reaching war-hit Tigray: USAID chief](#)
- VRT NWS, 5 August: [Volksfront van Tigray verovert oude koningsstad Lalibela in de naburige Ethiopische provincie Amhara](#) [in Dutch] - Translation: [People's Front of Tigray conquers ancient king town of Lalibela in neighboring Ethiopian province of Amhara](#)
- Reuters, 5 August: [U.S. calls for Tigrayan forces to respect Lalibela cultural heritage](#)
- OCHA, 5 August: [Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update - Situation Report](#)
- Washington Post, 5 August: [Samantha Power has long championed humanitarian intervention. Ethiopia's crisis is putting her to the test.](#)
- Spy Talk, 5 August: [Secret Agents, Threats, Fake News Target Ethiopia Regime's Critics in US](#)
- France24, 6 August: [Tigray rebels reject calls to leave neighbouring regions: "You see, we are under siege."](#)
- Associated Press, 6 August: [At river where Tigrayan bodies floated, fears of 'many more'](#)
- Ethiopian Press Agency, 6 August: [Death Sentences Passed On Tigrayan Members of ENDF](#)
- The East African, 7 August: [Ethiopia's unrest sucks neighbours in as Addis shuns talk on dialogue](#)
- GQ Magazine, 7 August: [The human cost of the Tigray conflict: 'We are in constant fear'](#)

## 5. Opinion pieces

- Mehari Taddele Maru: [Elections? What elections? Abiy is Counting on a Military Victory](#)
- Temesgen Kahsay: [Tigray: Our suffering may not be convenient, but it is real](#)
- Daniel Gebregiorgis: [The war in Tigray: the makings of a man-made famine, and what can be done](#)
- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot - BBC podcast: [Ethiopian academic on why he joined the Tigray Defence Forces](#)
- International Crisis Group: [The Dangerous Expansion of Ethiopia's Tigray War](#)
- Tom Dannenbaum: [Famine in Tigray, Humanitarian Access, and the War Crime of Starvation](#)
- Statement by Alice Wairimu Nderitu, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the [continued deterioration of the situation in Ethiopia](#)

## **Digest 31.           Hunger, even for those who have money in the bank (31 August 2021)**

This circular letter highlights the problematics of the investigation on human rights abuses in Tigray (section 1). Further, of course, there is famine in Tigray – we also discuss how the farmers try to avoid a second failed harvest due to the war (section 2). Section 3 is then about the situation of the universities in Tigray and Amhara regions. A turn of events makes that several crucial documents were leaked over the last month (section 4), that all contribute shedding lights on the near-absence of firm reactions by the international community when it comes to the war in Tigray. We conclude with the announcement of a new book on revolutionary struggles and gender norms in Tigray (section 5), an overview of media articles (section 6) and some opinion pieces, starting with the [open call by African intellectuals for urgent action on Ethiopia](#) (section 7).

### **1. The human rights investigation**

Insiders confirmed that the much-hyped joint investigation by the [Ethiopian Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#) and the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) on war crimes in Tigray seems not to come off the ground. The OHCHR has assigned this work to their Addis Ababa office, who highly value good relationships with the Ethiopian administration, even [clearing their findings with the authorities](#) (see also section 4.a), but whose professionalism and independence may be questioned.

We had a brainstorm with human rights experts involved with the situation in Ethiopia, and the conclusion is that there should really be an independent investigation. The joint investigation does not bode well. The budget is not the problem, there is enough money from donors.

The official train of thought in Ethiopia is very one-sided. Humanitarian law is not easy, but the fundamental problem at the moment is that there is hardly anyone among the Ethiopian experts who can still look at facts objectively.

Yet, on film and photo material of massacres in Tigray, none of the victims is in military clothing. And even if the victims would have been fighters, then, for instance, the following are still war crimes:

1.       People thrown into the Tekeze River with their hands tied behind their back (Humera)
2.       People driven to the edge of a cliff and shot in the back (Mahbere Dego)
3.       People stoned to death (recent images published by Tghat)

Not recognizing this as war crimes indicates that the EHRC tends to see dead Tigrayans as TDF fighters, who would have been rightly killed, hence no investigation should be undertaken.

Additionally, there is no progress in investigations related to attacks on Eritrean refugee camps, neither the killing of humanitarian workers, particularly MSF.

Only a professional and neutral/objective international investigation will possibly come close to the truth. By the UN or an international court but not by the UN in Addis. In the current state of affairs, the investigation will turn out to impunity. Our brainstorm concluded that the EHRC is used as a means to keep up appearances of international justice. Apparently, the international community likes getting carried away in promises.

The BBC HardTalk interviewed Ethiopia's Attorney General Gedion. In his questions, journalist Steven Shakur refers twice to the [Humanitarian Atlas](#) as one of the main sources of information on the Tigray conflict, as well as to reports by Amnesty international. All is "officially downplayed", more openly even than EHRC does. Here is the audio recording <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct1n64>

A week earlier, Tigray's Getachew Reda was also interviewed at HardTalk: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct1n1k>

#### Related articles:

- Dyan Mazurana: [What 'Rape as a Weapon of War' in Tigray Really Means](#)
- Tghat, 9 August: [Killing for Pleasure II: Set of Photos Obtained from the Phone of an Ethiopian Soldier in Tigray](#) (Warning: Extremely Graphic Images)
- Amnesty International, 10 August: [Ethiopia: Troops and militia rape, abduct women and girls in Tigray conflict – new report](#)
- Le Monde, 11 August: [Ethiopie : Amnesty International dénonce des centaines de cas de viols, d'esclavage sexuel et de mutilations au Tigré](#) [in French]
- The Guardian, 11 August: ['Like I wasn't a person': Ethiopian forces accused of systematic rape in Tigray](#)
- Sky News, 11 August: [Ethiopia: 'I don't know if they realised I was a person' - Women subject to sexual violence in Tigray](#)
- Tghat, 11 August: [The War on Tigray in Numbers: Initial Analysis of Civilian Massacres](#)
- ChimpReports, 12 August: [UN SG Guterres asked to investigate genocide in Tigray](#)
- Today News Africa, 17 August: [Ethiopian authorities arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared ethnic Tigrayans for months, Human Rights Watch says](#)
- Black News Tonight, 19 August 2021: [Human Rights Advocate Meaza Gidey Gebremedhin Talks Tigray War](#)
- Reliefweb, 19 August: [Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update Situation Report, 19 August 2021](#)

## 2. HUNGER!

People really really have hunger in Tigray. Even the few emails that we received from MU colleagues (presumed 'middle class') mention the problem of hunger. This is due to the blockade by the Ethiopian authorities, blockade of lifelines, but also telecommunication and banks. Even if you have money in the bank, you cannot access it! The Tigray External Affairs Office elaborated on this on 25 August: [Extraordinary Briefing on humanitarian concerns, public health, economic concerns](#).

From our side, we published a first paper in ‘The Conversation’, already on 17 November 2020: [“Ethiopia’s Tigray region has seen famine before: why it could happen again”](#). And recently, the follow-up, again in ‘The Conversation’ on 22 August: [“How Ethiopia’s conflict has affected farming in Tigray”](#). Co-author Emnet Negash has been interviewed about this work by Deutsche Welle, Amharic Programme. [ውጊያ ያነቀው የትግራይ እና የአማራ ግብርና](#). Emnet's interview starts at 4:55

#### Related articles:

- Bloomberg, 10 August: [Hunger Stalks Millions as Abiy Asks Ethiopians to Join Army](#)
- BBC, 15 August: [Ethiopia: What do we know about aid going into Tigray?](#)
- European Commission, 19 August: [Tigray crisis: famine risk soars while humanitarian remain targeted](#)
- USAid, 19 August: [On the Humanitarian Situation in Ethiopia - Statement by Administrator Samantha Power](#)
- BBC, 20 August: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: US accuses Abiy's government of blocking aid](#)
- Today News Africa, 20 August: [US aid chief Samantha Power rings alarm bell over humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, blames Abiy’s government for “obstructing” aid and personnel](#)
- 21 August: [NGO worker’s raw notes of his visit to the Koraro village in Tigray](#) (republished by Tghat)
- Time, 23 August: [U.S. Imposes New Sanctions Over Tigray War as Thousands Face Famine Conditions](#)
- UN News, 26 August: [Catastrophe ‘unfolding before our eyes’ in Ethiopia’s Tigray region – UN chief](#) – all UN articles are available also in numerous other languages
- OCHA, 26 August: [Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update Situation Report](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 27 August: [Humanitarian situation worsens in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)

### 3. Universities

In Tigray’s universities, staff is now working without salaries since three months, while the universities have no more budget at hand and their internal funds blocked in the banks. Yet, Raya University and its president Prof. Tadesse Dejene (KULeuven alumnus) graduated a new batch of students on 13 August.

On the other hand there is a worrisome trend in some universities of the Amhara region: at Wollo University, a list of staff members of Tigrayan origin was published, including staff members on study leave abroad, which suggests names were retrieved from the university human resources database. At Debre Markos University, the management has organised military training for staff and students. In other universities, lecturers and students of Tigrayan origin are picked up by security forces and put in prison or brought to unknown locations.

We also hear from our colleagues at several universities in Ethiopia that, again and like all civil servants, they had to give a full month of salary in order to fund the Ethiopian army. Given the state

of the economy, people who have some money try to get it out of the country, through informal money transfer services. To try and prevent this, the Ethiopian authorities have forbidden all sales of properties, or even borrowing of money using property as a collateral. Officially the argument is to avoid that money can be sent to Tigray.

#### **Related articles:**

- University World News, 15 August 2021: University students still trapped in Tigray crisis, parents continue protests  
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210814090042185>

#### **4. Sometimes embarrassing leaks**

Just like many human rights advocates, we have often been puzzled by the neglect and late reactions of other countries throughout the world and of international organisations, who often do not go beyond “highly concerned” reactions, when it comes to the Tigray War. In August, a series of leaks, throw some light on what is going on behind the scenes. Imagine UN Women representatives downplaying the stories of the rape victims in Tigray, back in March, as a media hype (section 4.a). Or African Union staff using the official AU Twitter handle to ridicule calls for dialogue (section 4.b). Most probably they forgot to login to their private account, but it is in line with the siding of AU with their Addis Ababa hosts. Canada again has its economic interests and a leaked report shows siding with the Ethiopian authorities for the benefit of mining companies (section 4.c). France’s arms deals with Ethiopia have been highlighted in French media months ago and it is only in July that contracts were suspended (section 4.d). On the other hand, a leaked internal memo of the delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia comes with facts about the situation on the ground in Tigray and Ethiopia (section 4.e).

##### **a. UN officials downplay sexual violence**

Omna Tigray, 14 August: [Leaked Audio Recording of Tigray Meeting on Weaponized SGBV Held by the Ethiopian Country Offices of Various UN Agencies](#)

Foreign Policy, 27 August: [U.N. Officials Downplayed Sexual Violence in Ethiopia in Leaked Call](#)

##### **b. Siding by AU**

AFP, 13 August: [AU Probes Tweet Blasting US Call For Tigray Dialogue](#)

AFP, 29 August: [Tigray rebels accuse AU of bias as mediation efforts grow](#)

##### **c. Canada’s mining corporations**

The Breach, 13 August: [Leaked report accuses Canada of covering for mining companies in war-torn Ethiopia](#)

#### **d. France's arms sales**

Médiapart, 21 January 2021: [En Ethiopie, la France partagée entre business et défense des droits humains](#) [in French]

English translation: [In Ethiopia, France is divided between business and defence of human rights](#)

France24, 13 August 2021: [France suspends military cooperation with Ethiopia](#)

And, there is also this:

- No news about a possible suspension of Italy's weapons sales...
- Addis Fortune, 28 August: [Ethiopia Secures \\$408m from IMF, Officials Chuffed](#)

#### **e. EU internal memo**

Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia - A Leaked Document: [Overview August 14 – 20: Both sides remain convinced that a military victory is within reach](#)

### **5. New book on gender norms in Tigray**

Our colleague Thera Mjaaland just published: "Revolutionary Struggles and Girls' Education: At the Frontiers of Gender Norms in North-Ethiopia"

(<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353547170>), available at:

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498594653/Revolutionary-Struggles-and-Girls%E2%80%99Education-At-the-Frontiers-of-Gender-Norms-in-North-Ethiopia>).

She finished writing it just before the current war started. Thera's anthropological monograph is about the gender norms that do not necessarily change even though women participate in liberation struggles and girls get access to education. This issue is seen in relation to prevailing neoliberal development discourse where gender equality is understood as parity between girls and boys, women and men, and does not touch upon deep-rooted and hard-lived relations of power in the case of gender and sexuality.



## 6. Other media articles

- Radio Sweden, 9 August: [Ethiopian Orthodox Archbishop wants members in Sweden to donate to Ethiopian army](#)
- BBC Sport, 11 August: [Sifan Hassan: No regrets over quitting Ethiopia and calls for peace](#)
- Foreign Policy, 11 August: [Why Did Ethiopia's Prime Minister Rebuff Samantha Power?](#)
- AlJazeera, 13 August: [Is an all-out civil war now likely in Ethiopia?](#)
- Heise Online, 16 August: [Zerbricht Äthiopien im Bürgerkrieg?](#) [in German]
- Line of Actual Control, 17 August: [Journey to Mekelle: Ethiopian Airlines and the Tigray Conflict](#)
- Associated Press, 18 August: [New wave of Ethiopian detentions of Tigrayans includes kids](#)
- AlJazeera, 18 August: [Erdogan backs peaceful resolution to Ethiopia's Tigray conflict](#)
- BBC, 19 August: [Tigray crisis: Ethiopian teenagers become pawns in propaganda war](#)
- New York Times, 22 August: ['My Blood Is Boiling': War Fever Surges in Ethiopia as Its Civil War Spreads](#)
- Defenceweb, 23 August: [Ethiopia acquires Iranian UAVs for Tigray War](#)
- NPO Radio 1, 24 August: [Doemscenario Ethiopië komt steeds dichterbij](#) [in Dutch]
- AFP, 26 August: [Shell-shocked survivors describe brutal Tigray rebel advance](#)
- Ap, 26 August: [Tigray forces in Ethiopia support 'negotiated end' to war](#)
- Media Manipulation Casebook, 27 August: [Dueling Information Campaigns: The War Over the Narrative in Tigray](#)
- Imba Madre bridge, that was destroyed by retreating ENDF and Amhara forces: Tigray TV has a report (in Amharic) on the installation of a footbridge across Tekeze by public effort of the Shire people: <https://twitter.com/TghatMedia/status/1431207367211950080>
- And on 31 August, the Tigray Mass Media Agency reported that the bridge has been repaired: <https://www.facebook.com/375713289640371/posts/992769004601460/?d=n>
- IPS, 27 August: [How Many More Innocent Lives Must be Lost in Tigray, asks Adama Dieng](#)
- ABC News, 28 August: [Ethiopia conflict leaves diaspora in US fearing for families](#)

## 7. Opinion pieces

- [An open call by African intellectuals for urgent action on Ethiopia](#) (26 August)
- Semeneh Ayalew Asfaw: [Ethiopia: The Grim Search for Political Light in a Crisis](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Five Scenarios of State Collapse in Ethiopia](#)
- Rashid Abdi: [A major new Ethiopia-Eritrea offensive using Turkish drones predicted](#)
- Leonard Rubenstein and Mulugeta Gebregziabher: [The assault on health care in Tigray](#)
- Tony Magaña: [Addis Ababa narcissism is costing more suffering and loss of life](#)
- Martin Plaut: [The Kenyan speech at the UN Security Council that spooked PM Abiy](#)
- Ariam Kidane: [Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis Is a Genocide, Activists and Members of the Diaspora Say](#)

## **Digest 32.        Field data show that large lands have been left fallow in Tigray (12 September 2021)**

This newsletter comes with a little bit of positive news: primary and secondary schools will reopen soon in Tigray (section 1). From our side, we published a new edition of the Tigray Atlas (section 2) and analysed the status of cropping in Tigray. The next harvest is anticipated to be “normal” on only 20%-50% of the farm parcels (on the condition that the rains do not stop early) (section 3) – the hunger situation is catastrophic and we may count a person dying from hunger every two minutes (section 4)! There is no humanitarian corridor yet (section 5). On the diplomatic front we note that there will be an update on Tigray to the UN Human Rights Council by Michelle Bachelet on **Monday**, as well as a call for peace by 24 Ethiopian Civil Society Organisations (section 6). We conclude this digest with some news from the academic world (section 7), from different media sources (section 8) and some opinion pieces (section 9).

### **1. Schools to reopen in Tigray!**

After a year-long closure due to covid and war, the Tigray primary and secondary schools are due to start classes on 20 September. This is encouraging for helping the mental health of the children and all families, as it indicates the return of a more normal functioning society. And obviously, this is also important for the educational progress of the children.

### **2. New edition of the Tigray Atlas**

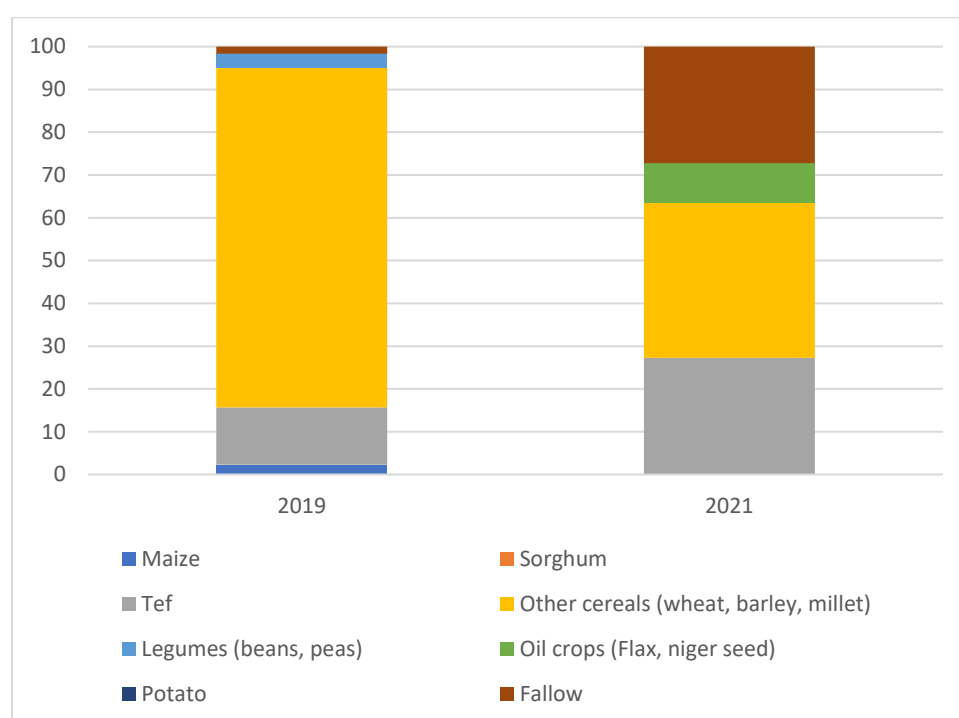
We have published a new edition of the “Tigray: Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation), with more maps on the food situation, on the 2021 rains and unfortunately, on the massacres. It can be downloaded here:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181\\_Tigray\\_Atlas\\_of\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_situation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181_Tigray_Atlas_of_the_humanitarian_situation)

### **3. Farming in Tigray**

In view of the grossly insufficient delivery of food aid to the starving people of Tigray, we are hoping that the 2021 harvest will not be too bad. We carried out a field survey on 20-30 August, jointly with Mekelle University and can only conclude that the top crop for the hunger season, maize, has often not been grown, because conditions were too risky during the planting season (April-May). Many farmers also have roasted and eaten the wheat and barley that was intended for sowing, especially while they were hiding for warfare in the mountains. There is an increase in tef sowing, because that crop could be sown two-three weeks later (mid- to end-July) and it will continue to grow on residual moisture after the rains stop. But especially, many farmlands have been left fallow, or were only sown

with linseed; and in many cases the crop stands look below expectation. See below our findings regarding the share of the land with different crop types and with fallow in the Kilte Awula'ilo district (around Wukro) in the peace year 2019 and the war year 2021 (with similar rainfall conditions).



The draft paper (joint research by MU and UGent's geography departments) can be accessed here: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354385966\\_August\\_2021\\_status\\_of\\_cropping\\_in\\_the\\_wider\\_surroundings\\_of\\_Mekelle\\_Tigray\\_Ethiopia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354385966_August_2021_status_of_cropping_in_the_wider_surroundings_of_Mekelle_Tigray_Ethiopia)

#### 4. Every two minutes somebody dies from hunger in Tigray!

The number of daily deceases in Tigray due to famine is difficult to tally because there are starving people all over the region; not all do make it to the (barely functioning) health centers, and in hospitals people are lying on the floor in the corridors. The starvation and blockade make that people may easily catch normally minor diseases and die from it. So far the blockade that the Ethiopian government imposes on Tigray could not be lifted, not by diplomacy and not by warfare.

Besides our atlas, there is also very detailed information on OCHA's webpage [ETHIOPIA - TIGRAY REGION](#) which is regularly updated – where it is reported that 350,000 up to 900,000 people are famine-affected victims according to IPC, WFP and USAID.

Professor Tony Magaña, who continued to work in the Ayder hospital while Ethiopian and Eritrean troops occupied Mekelle, wrote: [Estimate of total civilian deaths of the Tigray in the conflict with Ethiopia](#)

From our side, Tim Vanden Bempt extrapolated the number of hunger deaths in Tigray, [following the information from IPC](#), in an Excel Table, which leads to the following best estimates:

- Minimum 425 hunger deaths PER DAY in Tigray
- Maximum 1201 hunger deaths PER DAY in Tigray
- The minimum value corresponds to one hunger death in Tigray every three minutes and the catastrophic upper end is one hunger death every minute!

#### On the same topic:

- AFP, 2 September: [Tigray crisis 'set to worsen dramatically', UN warns](#)
- UN News, 2 September: [Tigray aid situation worsening by the day, warn UN humanitarians](#)
- AFP, 3 September: [AU urges Ethiopia to ease humanitarian access to Tigray](#)
- EUObserver, 3 September: [UN says Ethiopia war risks causing famine](#)
- Democracy Now!, 7 September: [Millions in Ethiopia's Tigray Are on Brink of Famine, Warns World Food Programme](#)
- UN News, 7 September: ['Unprecedented funding gap' for 7 million facing hunger in Ethiopia: WFP](#) (UN News)
- Reuters, 7 September: [U.N. footage from northern Ethiopia shows humanitarian crisis](#)
- Tigrai Media House, 7 September: [Interview Jan Nyssen: Ethiopia's Starvation Policy: 180 Tigrayans die daily](#)

#### 5. No humanitarian corridor yet to Tigray

The Tigray Government confirmed last week that the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) had withdrawn from Afar Region. Hence, the argument put forward by the Ethiopian Government that humanitarian access through Afar is not possible because of TDF war activities is no longer valid - yet we have not seen an increase in the number of trucks allowed to pass from Semera to Mekelle.

As a small sign of hope, there is the start of an EU airbridge to Mekelle, though the Ethiopian authorities did not allow any medicines to be transported on the flight of a first plane on 11/9. And in any case, such flights cannot substitute the huge *noria* of aid lorries that is necessary to curb the famine!

#### 6. Human rights and peace

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet will deliver an update to the UN Human Rights Council on **Monday, 13 September 2021** on the situation of human rights in the Tigray region and on progress made in the context of the joint UN and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission investigation. [See the full announcement and weblink](#). We noted already that the investigators did not

visit Aksum, Idaga Hamus, Adigrat, Mahbere Dego, Debre Abbay and so many other places where the worst things happened.

A call for peace has been launched by 24 Ethiopian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):

- Addis Standard, 10 September, [Call for peace by more than two dozens local civil society organisations](#)

We have double feelings: for 8 months, as long as the war was inside Tigray, these CSOs were silent while all the massacres, and gender-based violence were ongoing.

Now, some organisations seem to have shifted positions: this is possibly an indication that the mood among the general public in Ethiopia towards the war is also changing.

## **7. In the academic world**

A Tigrayan PhD student in one of Ethiopia's universities, reacted on our earlier information about ethnic profiling happening at universities in the Amhara region: "There are no such things here at XXX University. This ethnic profiling is only in the Amhara region. The atmosphere of XXX University where I am working is so nice!!! You know, as Tigray is blocked, my employer in Tigray could not pay my salary for the last 6 months. But my Oromo friends and professors are helping me to survive."

- University World News, 4 September: [Politicians urged to heed academics and end Tigray war](#)

## **8. In the media**

- Die Welt, 1 September: [Das nächste Jugoslawien](#) [in German]
- AP, 2 September: [In Ethiopia, Tigray forces accused of abuses](#)
- CNN, 5 September: [Men are marched out of prison camps. Then corpses float down the river](#)
- The Telegraph, 5 September: [Ethiopia's Tigrayans rounded up, mutilated and dismembered in civil war ethnic purge](#)
- BBC, 5 September: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: Thousands reported killed in clashes](#)
- AFP, 5 September: [Sudan Seizes 'Weapons Shipment' From Ethiopian Plane](#)
- Le Soir, 7 September: [Entre famine et crise du Tigré, l'Éthiopie se profile comme la prochaine Yougoslavie](#) [in French]
- Reuters, 8 September: [Sudan summoned Ethiopia's ambassador over 29 bodies found in river](#)
- UK Parliament, 8 September: Westminster Hall debate: Humanitarian situation in Tigray – [Video](#) – [Full transcript](#) .
- NRK, 9 September: [Dette møtte Etiopia-eksperten da han kom hjem fra ferie](#) [in Norwegian] – This is what the Ethiopia expert found when he returned home from vacation
- Le Monde, 10 September: [En Éthiopie, la "petite guerre" totale](#) [in French]

## 9. Opinion pieces

- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot (from Tigray): [How do you expect to stop war crimes with a request?](#)
- Gwynne Dyer: [War-torn Ethiopia is on its way to becoming another Yugoslavia](#)
- Mukesh Kapila: [Following the Tigray conflict, the rocky road to peace in Ethiopia](#)
- Ermias Teka: [Ethiopia's competing alliances – can the centre hold?](#)
- Eliza Mackintosh, CNN: [From Nobel laureate to global pariah: How the world got Abiy Ahmed and Ethiopia so wrong](#)

## Digest 33.            **Calculating Tigray's hunger deaths (12 October 2021)**

Renewed warfare, ["all out war" seems real again](#), which will strongly add upon the suffering of the populations in and around Tigray. In this 33<sup>rd</sup> digest, we address in the first place hunger and starvation in Tigray (section 1). Directly related, we have published version 2.1 of the Tigray Atlas (section 2). The communication blackout makes that receiving news from Tigray remains extremely difficult (section 3); the situation is worst in Western Tigray where gruesome videos and reports of torture and execution continue to emerge (section 4). Ethiopian politicians, including one of the PM's advisors openly call for genocide (section 5), which sounds louder than the calls for ceasefire and negotiations (section 6). We continue naming the victims and Tigray TV regularly reports from the locations where massacres have taken place (section 7). Life for Tigrayans is extremely difficult, in the academic world (section 8), but also the daily life of Tigrayans all over Ethiopia (section 9). Psychological stress is also addressed in a new book by Selam Kidane related to Eritrean refugees (section 10). On the diplomatic front there is now a clear statement by the European parliament, while higher UN officials have been expelled from Ethiopia (section 11). We conclude this digest with an overview of other media articles (section 12) and opinion pieces (section 13).

### 1. Hunger and starvation

In line with [Save The Children in Yemen](#), or [Oxfam for the worldwide situation](#), we used IPC, USAID or WFP estimates, and population statistics, to calculate, for Tigray, a minimum of 425 hunger deaths per day, and a "conservative maximum" of 1201 per day. That is, averaged, **one person dying of starvation per two minutes**. With difficulties of access and communication, such extrapolation from the numbers in the IPC phases is the only very approximate method to know the number of starvation victims. Quite a number of impressive media article have been published over the last month:

- Aftenposten (Norway), 27 September 2021: [Unike bilder viser forholdene i fredsprisvinnerens land](#) [in Norwegian] – English translation: [Unique pictures show the conditions in the Peace Prize laureate's country](#)
- Associated Press, 20 September: ['I just cry': Dying of hunger in Ethiopia's blockaded Tigray](#)
- AFP, 23 September: ['Silent killing': Starvation stalks Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- UN OCHA, 23 September: [Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report](#)
- Tigray TV, 19 September: [Report on Famine in Tigray](#) [in Tigrinya, English translation]
- Der Spiegel, 16 September: [»Eine der schlimmsten Hungerkrisen seit Jahrzehnten«](#) [in German]
- AlJazeera, 23 September: [Tigray mothers share shocking accounts of dire famine conditions](#)
- Panorama, 17 September: [Ethiopian Bishop: "Millions to die in Tigray if humanitarian aid doesn't go through"](#)
- 30 Organizations Issue [Joint Open Letter to UN Secretary-General and Permanent Representatives of Security Council Member States](#) on Ending Violence and Famine in Tigray (22 September)
- Reuters, 29 September: [U.N. aid chief to Ethiopia on famine in Tigray: 'Get those trucks moving'](#)

- Globe News Net, 1 October: [Ethiopia famine: UN reports ‘unprecedented’ malnutrition in Tigray](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Feast and Famine in Ethiopia](#) (World Peace Foundation blog)
- The Economist, 9 October: [Ethiopia is deliberately starving its own citizens](#)

## 2. Tigray Atlas

A new edition of the [Tigray Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation](#) has been published – version 2.1! We acknowledge support by “[Every Casualty Counts](#)” and especially thank the intern students for mapping and editing text.

- Mereba Esset, 21 September: [ኣብ ትግራይ ዝወርድ ዘሎ ግፍዕታትን ሰብ-ሰራሕ ጥሜትን ንምርዳእ ዳታ ዘለዎ ግድ](#) [in Tigrinya] - The role of data to understand the atrocities and the human-made famine in the Tigray (interview Emnet Negash)

## 3. Communication blackout

No internet, telephone, travel: Associated Press correspondent Cara Anna details challenges of reporting on Ethiopia’s Tigray region on [BBC World Service](#) (at 32:20).

Many of our readers may have come across the larger Tigrayan media such as Tigray TV, Dimtsi Woyane or TMH, essentially broadcasting TV and YouTube videos. The international observer may not be aware but there is also the pluralistic Radio Wegahta Tigray, essentially broadcasting to the rural areas of Tigray: <https://axumitemedia.com/profile/>. Radio Wegahta Tigray transmissions are however temporarily interrupted due to lack of funds.

## 4. Western Tigray

We have received a forensic report on the recovery of bodies from the Tekeze/Setit river in Sudan, prepared by “SAHAN-Ethiopia”. Very depressive to read it. All victims were tied up. The report provides evidence that some victims had been killed in Humera back in November, kept in a mass grave for months, and then transported and dumped in the river. One of the victims bears a tattoo: **ያልፋል**, “it will pass soon”...

And, equally depressive, the Italian magazine Panorama, on 30 September published a graphic report on the killings in Humera: [Le atrocità commesse dai soldati amhara in Tigray](#) [in Italian – English translation: [Atrocities committed by Amhara soldiers in Tigray](#)]



## 5. Open calls for genocide

High-level Ethiopian officials Daniel Kibret and Agegnehu Teshager openly called for genocide in the style of the sinister Rwandan Radio des Mille Collines. The style figure oscillating between "TPLF" and "Tigrayans" is a constant (example: [https://twitter.com/hayet\\_alem/status/1438480789684080647](https://twitter.com/hayet_alem/status/1438480789684080647) – [copy the link to your browser](#)). Field observers in Amhara Region noted it often from the mouth of intermediary authorities in the surroundings of Gondar and Bahir Dar. Some media articles:

- AFP, 20 September: [US blasts 'dangerous' rhetoric by ally of Ethiopia PM](#)
- BBC Newshour, 25 September: [The speech by Daniel Kibret, a senior advisor to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, amounts to an incitement to genocide, says Dr. Awol Allo](#), a senior law lecturer at Keele University, UK.
- NRC, 14 September: [Is in Tigray sprake van genocide in opdracht van hogerhand?](#) [in Dutch]
- Michael Rubin: [Will Ethiopia's genocide be worse than Rwanda's?](#) (Washington Examiner)
- Vice, 14 September: [Hate Speech on Facebook Is Pushing Ethiopia Dangerously Close to a Genocide](#)

## 6. Calls for ceasefire and negotiations

- 17 September: Kjetil Tronvoll discusses the situation in Tigray, the calls for negotiated ceasefire, and the problem with the aid trucks on the BBCWorldService. About 45 minutes in <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w172xv59bt3bp8h>
- Security forces in Addis Ababa detained Abraha Desta, a senior official in the Tigray interim administration who had recently called for negotiations to end the conflict. A week later, another [top member of the Tigray interim government, Gebremeskel Kassa fled to Rwanda](#) and asked for asylum.
- AFP, 9 October: [Top Official In Tigray Interim Government Seeks Asylum Abroad](#)
- The East African, 24 September: [Ethiopia's minister calls for peace amid fears of Tigray reinvasion](#)
- International Crisis Group, 13 September: [Working toward a ceasefire in Ethiopia](#)
- Kebour Ghenna: [How Did Ethiopia So Badly Miscalculate Its War with Tigray?](#) (Borkena)
- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot: [Ethiopia: Definition and politics of ceasefire](#) (World Peace Foundation)

## 7. Naming the victims

Tigray TV revisits locations of massacres and broadcasts about it.

- Zana massacre (in Tigrinya): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSYQ13z0pkY&t=26s> : the Eritrean soldiers have been shelling, killing house to house and also in the caves where people were trying to hide.
- Sewha /Gu'iguna massacre (in English): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alJB2R7Degc>: with interviews of parents of the victims on their burial site
- Memorial ceremony for the Aksum victims as well as testimonies of witnesses (in Tigrinya): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7N09BHJCbOU>
- Gemada (Irob) massacre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6am6LnT99pw> (in Tigrinya): Eritrean soldiers killed 13 members of a family and threw them in a river which coloured red; relatives were denied to bury the bodies and mourn.

These reports are mostly within a longer broadcast and sometimes tracing back is not easy. For instance, the Grizana massacre was covered but we could not retrace it. Any assistance pointing to archived Tigray TV videos about the massacres is most welcome.

See also:

- Amnesty International: Petition: [Demand justice for sexual violence survivors in Tigray](#)
- Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 22 September: [Atrocity Alert No. 271: Ethiopia, Burundi and Philippines](#)

## 8. In the academic world

**Mekelle University** Community, 25 September: Call for lifesaving intervention to the international community in order to stop the starvation - <https://twitter.com/drhailayabrha/status/1443176453810491394/photo/1>

**Thomas More University** (Belgium): [Ethiopian civil war blocks dream of ICE Honours alumnus and space ambassador Tensae](#)

Some information from **universities in the Amhara region**, from reliable sources. Lecturers of Tigrayan origin are not only put in prison by the Amhara police, and kept at unknown locations for months sometimes. At these universities, Tigrayans are also continuously monitored by the campus police and their phones are tapped. Campus guards lead the police to the residences of Tigrayans. Hence, the management of these universities is complicit to the ethnic prosecution by the government of the Amhara Region.

**Tigrayan scholars continue writing up their PhD thesis**, dropping tears on every page... Recently, we could [congratulate Dr Hadgu Hishe at K.U.Leuven](#), Belgium. In his thanksword, he broadcast Eyerusalem's poem: "What do you do"? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2jV3jmoN28>)

Recently 10 Tigrayan scholars who **graduated at various Chinese universities** could not travel back to Ethiopia and are stranded in Rwanda. They are looking for scholarships, jobs, etc. If you can assist them by any means, please contact Dr. Mehari Desta Hawku: [hawku621@nwafu.edu.cn](mailto:hawku621@nwafu.edu.cn); twitter: @MehariDesta6.

## 9. Daily life of Tigrayans in Ethiopia

The country-wide ethnic prosecution of Tigrayans is well illustrated by an event that

happened on 30 September to a displaced Tigrayan woman reduced to begging for herself and her kids on the streets of Addis Ababa. This is how the police treated her: <https://fb.watch/8pPLfho51W/>

The police now have complete impunity and are operating a policy of ethnic profiling against Tigrayans in the city. Below are some testimonies among the many.

Another Tigrayan witnesses fled from his home in Hawzien in Tigray taking nothing with him after federal and Eritrean troops moved into the area and were targeting all the young men. Like many others he hid in a cave in the mountains. He stayed there for three days without food or water then walked over 100 km to Mekelle. From there he left for Addis just before the blockade on 28 June. He found work in a restaurant but was arrested at work by police who accused him of terrorism - all Tigrayans in the city are now considered terrorists. He was thrown into jail for 13 days where his hands were tied, and he was left out in the rain without a blanket, which compromised his health. He has now been released but it is increasingly dangerous for anyone with a Tigrayan accent to move freely in the city. He can't work, he can't return to Tigray, and, like many others, is trapped in a city that doesn't want him there.

A Tigrayan woman fled to Addis Ababa to try to escape the war and went to stay with a friend there. She also was recently thrown into jail for no reason other than her ethnicity and was released on bail at a cost of 10,000 ETB (about 190 €). At her release, she noticed that her friend had fled to an unknown place. She is now staying with neighbours she doesn't really know and she doesn't feel safe. No one will employ her because of the almost universal hostility to Tigrayans.

Another ethnic Tigrayan was brought up in Addis Ababa and works for the government. He told us that civil servants last month had to donate a months' salary to the war effort, even though inflation means that prices are extremely high right now. For him this is particularly bitter as he has to contribute to the fight against his own people.

## 10. New book by Selam Kidane

[“Trauma, Collective Trauma and Refugee Trajectories in the Digital Era: Development of the Trauma Recovery Understanding Self-Help Therapy”](#). (findings mainly from Eritrean refugee communities in multiple locations)

In line with this, investigative journalist Lucy Kassa conveys very well the emotional challenges of covering the Tigray war: [“Massacres in the Dark”](#) (Okay Africa)

## 11. Diplomacy

### a. *European Parliament*

On 7 October, the European parliament overwhelmingly voted a resolution on Tigray: [MEPs call for sanctions if situation fails to improve by end of month](#). Only four right-wing extremist MEPs opposed the resolution (one from the Netherlands and three from Belgium 😞 )

### b. *Quo vadis, UN?*

Seven senior UN staff have been expelled from Ethiopia. This includes the head of the UNHRC, who was leading the investigation on massacres in Tigray. Despite compromising their principles, teaming up with the government-bound EHRC, higher UN officials have still been expelled from Ethiopia. The real targets behind this decision are obviously not the 7 officials, but the Tigrayan victims who need such support more than ever.

Further, an audio was leaked, in which UN staff in Ethiopia openly expressed their support for Abiy Ahmed’s policies; some months ago Addis Ababa-based UN staff were recorded discrediting the rape victims in Tigray, and IOM officials cooperated in transporting Eritrean refugees back from Addis Ababa to the war zone. Finally, on [11 October, the AFP mentions that UN recalled](#) their Ethiopia migration head.

### c. *Related media and opinion articles*

- UN News, 6 October: [Guterres criticizes ‘unprecedented expulsion’ of staff from Ethiopia; calls for focus on saving lives](#)
- Vanda Felbab-Brown: [The exemplary U.S. sanctions regime for Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict and its limitations](#) (Brookings Foreign Policy)
- Alex Dewaal: [See No Evil: How the United Nations is Blind to the Famine in Tigray](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- The White House, 16 September: [Background Press Call By Senior Administration Officials on Ethiopia](#)
- Chidi Odinkalu, Paulos Tesfagiorgis, Alex de Waal and Delia Burns: [Neither Impartial nor Independent: The Joint UN-EHRC Human Rights Investigation in Tigray](#)
- AFP, 14 September: Fact check – [WFP vehicles used to transport Tigray rebels?](#)

- BBC, 27 September: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: Why are hundreds of aid trucks stranded?](#)
- Tigray TV, 28 September: Interview of WFP truck drivers <https://twitter.com/TsenatSaba/status/1443447695360802820>
- G.A.Z.: [Involving a government-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in the investigations in Tigray destined to be a giant miscarriage of justice](#) (Globe News Net)
- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot: [Not Impartial, Not Principled, Non-Starter: African Union Mediation in Ethiopia](#) (Mulugeta Gebrehiwot)
- The New York Times, 17 September: [Biden Threatens New Sanctions Against Ethiopia War Leaders](#)
- Panorama, 28 September: [Italian Tigrayans: "Financing and military agreement between Rome and Addis Ababa"](#), also [in Italian](#)
- Mulugeta Gebregziabher: [Chiedamo a Draghi di prendere posizione sul genocidio in Tigray](#) [in Italian]
- AP, 29 September: [The AP Interview: Ethiopia crisis 'stain on our conscience'](#) (Martin Griffiths, UN humanitarian chief)
- The Globe and Mail, 3 October: [Canadian miners pursue prospects in war-torn Tigray](#)
- AP, 2 October: [UN says Ethiopia has no legal right to expel 7 UN officials](#)
- Eritrea Hub, 29 September: [European Union spells out its policy towards the Tigray war](#)
- The Economist, 9 October: [Abiy against the world - Ethiopia is losing friends and influence](#)

## 12. Other media articles

- AFP, 17 September: ['Erase them from history': Eritreans mark 20 years since brutal purge](#)
- The New York Times, 21 September: [Sudan Leaders Say They Thwarted Coup Attempt by Loyalists of Former Dictator](#)
- RFI, 9 October: [Nouvelle offensive des troupes gouvernementales contre les rebelles tigréens](#) [in French]
- CNN, 6 October: [Ethiopia used its flagship commercial airline to transport weapons during war in Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 26 September: [Sudan says it repelled attempted incursion by Ethiopian forces](#)
- Reuters, 17 September: [WHO's Tedros seen running unopposed for top job despite Ethiopia snub - sources](#)
- Salon, 25 September: [Eyewitness accounts, video confirm reports of Tigrayan children held in concentration camp](#)
- The Guardian, 13 September: [The battle for Mekelle: Ethiopia's civil war over Tigray goes on – in pictures](#)
- BBC World Service Newshour, 9 October: [Prof. Kjetil Tronvoll explains the major Ethiopian offensive against Tigray and TDF positions. 30 min into the programme.](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 4 October: [Ethiopia conflict sees hunger and atrocities spread from Tigray to Amhara](#)
- Human Rights Watch: [Ethiopia: Eritrean Refugees Targeted in Tigray](#)
- BBC, 3 October: [Ethiopia Tigray crisis: From monk to soldier - how war has split a church](#)

### 13. Other opinion pieces

- Leah Abraham: [The Rise and Rise of Fascism in Ethiopia](#) (African Arguments)
- Ermias Teka: [Eritrea's involvement in the Tigray war: did Asmara reap the dividends it had hoped for?](#) (Eritrea Hub)
- Rob Marriott: [Heavy Is the Head: The Trials of Abiy Ahmed](#) (Okay Africa)
- Alex Dewaal: [The world watches as Abiy loses it — and risks losing Ethiopia, too.](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Hidat Hagos: [Las fuerzas de Etiopia, Eritrea y Amhara usaron la violación sexual en una manera sistemática y en un nivel de crueldad nunca visto y con perfiles de genocidio.](#) (Nueva Revolucion [in Spanish])
- Isha Sesay, Masai Ujiri, Gbenga Akinnagbe and Liz Agbor-Tabi: [Where is the outrage for Ethiopia?](#) (CNN opinion)
- Radio Mereb, 1 October: [Interview with Professor Kjetil Tronvoll on Current Affairs](#)
- Credendo: [The Tigray conflict is expected to be long lasting, but unlikely to lead to all out civil war in Ethiopia](#)
- Today News Africa – Opinion : [Amid Tigray famine, Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed is holding lavish celebration to inaugurate new government on a scale not seen since the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie almost one hundred years ago](#)

## **Digest 34.            Interactive database of known civilian victims goes online (3 November 2021)**

In these times when the Ethiopian “final offensive” against Tigray seems to have failed, there may be some hope for negotiations and lifting the siege on Tigray. People there live in famine conditions (section 2) and are far from recovering from the numerous massacres, many of which have even not been documented. We tried to contribute to this documentation effort by preparing an interactive database that can be freely consulted online (section 1). We bring sad news, again, from universities in Tigray and Amhara region (section 3). Finally, we reflect on “bothsidesism” – a worrisome tendency in some media and international organisations (section 4), dangerous rhetoric in social media (section 5), and publish a usual shortlist of interesting media articles (section 6) and opinion pieces (section 7).

### **1. Online interactive database of the Tigray War massacres**

Thanks to funding from “[Every Casualty Counts](#)”, we could bring the database of civilian victims of the Tigray war online. Follow this link: <http://www.ethiopiaticigraywar.com>

In the online database, lists of massacres and victims can be consulted based on location or a description of the incident. We count on our readers to visit the site and share the link through email, social media, etc. It may be interesting to contrast this database with the findings of the joint EHRC-OHCHR investigation, bound to be made public on 3 November in the afternoon.

#### **Further reading:**

- Associated Press, 2 November 2021: [Ethiopia tried to limit rare UN report on Tigray war abuses](#)
- Globe News Net, 27 October 2021: [Former Tigray interim Government Top Official says Genocide ‘Undoubtedly’ committed on Tigrayans](#)
- Vice News, 1 November 2021: [Escaping Rape and Murder in Ethiopia's Civil War](#)

### **2. Famine and inventive farming**

I happened to come across this news item that was originally broadcast by Tigray TV, in early July. <https://twitter.com/wijzijntigray/status/1425922125311905796/video/1> It shows a farmer in Esret (woreda Saharti) ploughing with two donkeys. One can only do that in a sandy environment or on other soft soil. Not every farmer would be able to control his donkeys like this man is doing and have them walking in a regular way. Ploughing in July is so late and at this pace, the farmer cannot plough and sow his land timely... Many surrounding lands in the film were unploughed and will not give any yield this year. The journalist takes care not to interrupt the farmer’s activity and walks with him. The man tells that all oxen in their village have been killed by Eritrean soldiers, and the donkeys were stolen. In Esret, at least 37 civilians have been killed by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers in February-

March 2021 (massacres N° 292 and 359 in the online database). This farmer took his donkeys to the mountains to carry food while they were hiding for warfare, and, luckily, they have not been looted.

#### Further reading:

- Associated Press, 16 October 2021: [‘God have mercy’: Tigray residents describe life under siege](#)
- The Spectator, 12 October 2021: [Tough times for tenacious Tigray](#)
- The National News, 22 October 2021: [Locusts threaten to compound hunger crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- RTBF, 2 November 2021: [Un an de guerre au Tigré : blocus, famine et contre-offensive \[in French\] – English translation : One year of war in Tigray: blockade, famine and counter-offensive](#)
- Alex de Waal, 16 October 2021: [Why Ethiopia's Tigray region is starving, but no famine declared](#)

### 3. The Ethiopian universities, as affected by the Tigray War

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education had already stopped transferring budgets to the four universities in Tigray (in Mekelle, Aksum, Adigrat and Raya), but now we learned that these institutions have been formally closed and that the students were instructed to report to other universities in Ethiopia.

On 21 October, two Wollo University lecturers of Tigrayan origin were killed in Dessie. They were lynched by a mob, mobilised by the Amhara fano militias. The reliable Tigrayan news site Tghat, mentions that several of their Wollo University colleagues participated in that lynching mob 😞 (<https://twitter.com/TghatMedia/status/1454102303280148482->). Numerous other Tigrayan colleagues who work in universities of the Amhara region were arrested and are kept in custody.

### 4. “Bothsidesism”

See this article by Medhanie Gaim and Temesgen Kahsay, published on 27 October 2021: [Whataboutism and Bothsidesism in the War on Tigray](#) - In my view “bothsidesism” seems an easy trick, essentially avoiding to analyse what is going on, on the ground, and protecting the main perpetrators... Paraphrasing Samuel Gebru (<https://twitter.com/SMGebru/status/1451769535468642311>), one wouldn’t “both sides” the Jewish, Bosnian, Native American, Armenian, Uyghur, Tutsi, and Rohingya genocides. Then why apply it to Tigray? Our database (see section 1) contains 262 massacres, including some attributed to the Tigray Defence Forces. One cannot exclude that some members of the Tigray forces may have committed war crimes, in revenge of what happened in their village for example. Yet, it certainly is in a different order of magnitude. Also, on the side of Ethiopian and Amhara authorities, the orders come from the top – think about years old dehumanisation (“daytime hyenas”, “gorillas”, “cancer”, “weeds”, ...), the open calls for genocide and the greenlighting of rape, mentioned in our



earlier newsletters. “Bothsidesism” is an abolition of judgement, which plays in favour of fanatised genociders, taken out of reality, and who try to win time and confuse the minds by any means.

## **5. State of emergency and dangerous rhetoric**

Yesterday evening I received this message from a colleague at Addis Ababa University: “Here it is state of emergency, and the government may forcibly recruit anyone for the army. Addis is completely deserted at 9:30 PM”. News is also coming in of massive arrestations of civilian Tigrayans throughout the country. Such ethnic targeting is sustained by spreading of rumours through social media. One of the latest: “the 3% Tigrayan residents of Dessie would have defeated the Ethiopian army and fano militias and opened the way for the TDF”.

Unfortunately, some international supporters of the war against Tigray participate in spreading this dangerous rhetoric, such as Prof. Jon Abbink (African Studies Centre Leiden, The Netherlands) – see <https://twitter.com/wdavison10/status/1455422546480881670>.

An interesting discussion has developed on such lies that lead to dangerous ethnic tensions – see <https://twitter.com/N0tWoofers/status/1455701315934380035>. Conclusion of one of the participants in that discussion: “So basically yet another stab in the back myth. Why bother coming to terms with the reality that the military force you support lost a fight when you can just blame a convenient scapegoat for that defeat.”

- CNN, 25 October 2021: [Facebook knew it was being used to incite violence in Ethiopia. It did little to stop the spread, documents show](#)
- Meron T. Gebreananaye, 31 October 2021: [“Do It Even If It Grieves You”: Social Media Platforms Ignore Escalating Calls for Genocide in Ethiopia](#)
- Addis Standard, 2 November 2021: [Details of Ethiopia’s State of Emergency proclamation](#)
- The Telegraph, 2 November 2021: [Ethiopian capital prepares for attack as US warns Tigrayan rebels to stop flash advance](#)

## **6. Other articles**

- VOA News, 29 October 2021: [Terror in Tigray: The Ethiopian Refugee Crisis](#)
- Africa Confidential, 21 October: [Ethiopia – Into the hell of war again](#)
- BBC Newshour, 22 October, largely [addresses the situation in Ethiopia](#). Mekelle University past-president Prof. Kindeya Gebrehiwot at 30:00, on the Mekelle bombings and the siege; at 35:00 Samuel Getachew, independent journalist who was in Dessie and on the impacts of the conflict.
- Dimtsi Weyane Radio, 21 October 2021: [recording, showing the conditions under which most of Tigray can listen to the radio](#) – if they have still batteries...
- Daily Maverick (South Africa), 31 October 2021: [Abiy’s offensive against Tigray collapses: Dreams of a ‘new Ethiopia’ arise](#)

- Gerjon, 16 October 2021: [A look inside Harar Meda Airport, Ethiopia](#)
- Globe News Net, 16 October 2021: [Negotiation between Ethiopia and TPLF by excluding other political forces in Tigray 'futile' say three opposition parties in Tigray.](#)
- Bloomberg, 19 October 2021: [Ethiopia Stages Airstrikes Targeting Rebel Region's Capital](#)
- Channel 4, 28 October 2021: [Civilians joining Ethiopia's military to fight Tigray's rebels amid new offensive](#)
- Democracy Now, 7 October 2021: [Ethiopia: New Reports Expose Ethnic Cleansing & Illegal Arms Shipments on Commercial Flights](#)
- France24, 14 October 2021 : [Ethiopia's expanding civil war: 'We see a very worrying trajectory'](#)
- The New York Times, 12 October 2021: [Ethiopia Launches New Offensive on Tigray Rebels as Famine Looms](#)
- Der Spiegel, 22 October 2021: [Friedensnobelpreisträger und Kriegstreiber Abiy Ahmed - Wie konnte sich die Welt in diesem Mann so täuschen? \[in German\] - A Brutal War Waged By a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate](#)
- Reuters, 1 November 2021: [Dual Agenda - In Ethiopia's civil war, Eritrea's army exacted deadly vengeance on old foes](#)
- Reuters, 1 November 2021: [Key events in a year of war in northern Ethiopia](#)
- Reuters, 28 October 2021: [Doctor reports 10 dead from latest air strike in north Ethiopia war](#)
- BBC News, 25 October 2021. [Tigray crisis: How the West has fallen out with Ethiopia's PM](#)
- BBC Newsday, 2 November 2021. [Interview of Gebrekirstos Gebreselassie on the TDF-OLA alliance and breaking the siege.](#) Start at 27:00

## 7. Opinion pieces

- André Crismer & Jan Nyssen, Le Soir, 21 October 2021: ["Au Tigré, un peuple meurt et le monde se tait"](#) [in French] – English translation : [In Tigray, a population dies and the world is silent](#)
- CNT-AIT, 19 September 2021: [Spain 1936, Ethiopia 2021: the fight against fascism continues ...](#)
- Alex Rondos and Mark Medish, 17 October 2021: [Ethiopia Is Plunging Into Chaos. It's Time for a New Dayton Peace Process.](#)
- Jan Nyssen & André Crismer, La Libre Belgique, 2 November 2021: [Un an de guerre au Tigré, mais à quand le dialogue ?](#) [in French] – English translation : [A year of war in Tigray, but when will there be dialogue?](#)
- International Crisis Group: [Ethiopia's Civil War: Cutting a Deal to Stop the Bloodshed](#)

## Digest 35.        The world looks away from famine and ethnic cleansing (8 December 2021)

Famine and starvation in Tigray are worse than ever, and the world looks away (section 1). Diplomacy tends also to turn a blind eye on the ethnic cleansing of 1.2M Tigrayans (section 2)! As scientists, we do our best to share our findings related to this war and its effects on the affected human populations (section 3). Yet, despite Abiy's media blockade, we get some information about the resilience of the Tigray people (section 4). In Ethiopia, academics are heavily pressurised to join Abiy's war on Tigray (section 5), and there is also extreme ethnic targeting on Tigrayans who live in Addis Ababa and other towns in Ethiopia (section 6). The regime supporters now have discovered "panafricanism", while reversely progressive Americans call for arms embargo on Ethiopia (section 7). We conclude this Tigray digest, with links to some opinion pieces (section 8) and media articles (section 9).

### 1. Famine

[Famine Early Warning System](#) Network predicts by early next year the whole of Tigray and northern Ethiopia will be in or close to famine. The situation will be worse even than in Yemen.

From one of our friends: "The government of Tigray has estimated that there are 6.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in the region. OF THESE, 1.6 MILLION ARE FACING ACUTE FAMINE. Watching the news live from TIGRAY, while not being able to contact family and friends is traumatic."

#### Related media articles:

- ABC News, 13 November 2021: [A year of bloodshed, famine and civilian torture. Why is Ethiopia on the brink of all-out civil war?](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Tigray is starving, it is time for the UN to act](#)
- Jan Nyssen: [The humanitarian situation in Tigray – aid, food security and famine](#)
- The Guardian, 16 November: [Scores of children killed by starvation in Tigray, says health official](#)
- PBS Newshour, 12 November 2021: [U.N. says Ethiopia to ease blockade of aid for Tigray, but no official agreement in sight](#)
- Reuters, 12 November 2021: [WHO chief says his home region in Ethiopia under 'systematic' blockade](#)
- Axumite Media, 6 november 2021: interview Emnet Negash: ["የእዱግን ጀሪካንን ብወረርቷ ቀዳመን ዝተኣረፈ \[ዝተሰረቆ\] ንብረት ሓረስታይ እየን፣ ንምንታይ?" እምነት ነጋሽ፣ ብዓል ሞያ ሕርሻ](#) [in Tigrinya] ("Donkeys and jerrycans were the first farmers' essentials looted by the invaders. Why?")
- The Conversation, 4 November 2021: Podcast interview Emnet Negash - [The Ethiopia and Tigray conflict is worsening hunger in the region](#)
- AFP, 16 November 2021: [Starvation kills scores of children in Tigray hospitals: survey](#)
- UN News, 26 November: [9.4 million people are 'living their worst nightmare' in northern Ethiopia due to ongoing conflict](#)

- Deborah Mayersen, 22 November: [Human-Induced Famine in Tigray: A Potential Act of Genocide](#)

## 2. Ethnic cleansing

According to the UN's [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid](#) (OCHA) about 1.2 million people were displaced from the Western Zone to other parts of Tigray, while more than 70,000 people were displaced to Sudan since the start of the conflict in November last year.

### Related media article:

- Bloomberg, 3 November 2021 : [Armed Raids in Northwest Ethiopia Fill Camps With Displaced](#)

## 3. Scientific publications related to the Tigray war

- Gesesew H, Berhane K, Siraj ES, et al., 2021. [The impact of war on the health system of the Tigray region in Ethiopia: an assessment](#). BMJ Global Health 2021;6:e007328
- Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel, 2021. [Inventing hell: how the Ethiopian and Eritrean regimes produced famine in Tigray](#). Human Geography, in press.
- Bridget Conley, Alex de Waal, Deborah Mayersen, and Hollie Nyseth Brehm, 2021: Atrocity alert - [Tigrayan civilians and Oromo detainees in areas under Ethiopian government control](#). International Association of Genocide Scholars
- Salem Tewelde, 2021: [Mapmaking for memory's sake: The Tigray genocide](#). Interactions, November-December 2021.
- Vanden Bempt, T., Annys, S., Negash, E., Ghekiere, R., Nyssen, J., 2021. [Tigray: one year of conflict – Casualties of the armed conflict, 2020-2021](#) – Tigray (Ethiopia). Ghent (Belgium): Ghent University, Department of Geography & London (U.K.): Every Casualty Counts.

### Media and opinion articles related to the documentation of casualties in the Tigray war:

- SVT Nyheter, 21 November 2021: [Han räknar Tigraykrigets dödsoffer](#) [in Swedish]
- Deborah Mayersen: [Mass atrocities in Ethiopia expose the limitations of early warning tools](#)
- Associated Press, 15 November 2021: [‘You can’t even cry loudly’ – Counting Ethiopia’s war dead](#)

## 4. Resilience

Fragmentary news that reaches us from Tigray again confirms the resilience of the region. Internal telephone landlines linking Mekelle and Aksum, and the areas in between have been restored.

For the crop production, Tigrai TV presented a nice crop stand of sorghum in a village of Wajirat. The farmers had been forbidden to plough by the Ethiopian soldiers but they still did it. In absence of wider landscape views, we cannot assess whether this is local success or if the crop stand is good in the wider area. ([https://twitter.com/Efrem\\_Wediweyen/status/1463697864748670986](https://twitter.com/Efrem_Wediweyen/status/1463697864748670986)) A friend whose father is a farmer in a village of Sa'isi'e district also mentions that there is "really good harvest" expected around there.

## 5. Universities in Ethiopia

Universities in Ethiopia, and particularly those of Amhara region and Addis Ababa University are on the path of hate speech, ethnic discrimination and active prosecution of staff and students of Tigrayan origin, and whoever is in favour of ceasefire.

Gonder University revoked the Honorary Doctorate of Dr. Eleni Gabre-Madhin. ([https://twitter.com/wedi\\_atse/status/1465740386748428289](https://twitter.com/wedi_atse/status/1465740386748428289))

Addis Ababa University announced the retroactive [removal of academic degrees](#) conferred on ethnic Tigrayans for not supporting the government of Abiy Ahmed.

Earlier on, we mentioned the prosecutions at Bahir Dar University and the murder of professors of Tigrayan origin - one at Bahirdar University and two others at Wollo University.

Calls for investigation, sanctions and cancelling of cooperation programmes with certain Ethiopian universities are increasing.

- Professor Tony Magaña, 27 November 2021: [Ethiopian university removal of Tigray degrees may bring international sanctions](#)
- Bistandsaktuelt, 23 November 2021 : [Etiopia: Professor jobbet i byen i 40 år – så ble han henrettet foran huset sitt](#) [in Norwegian] – English translation : [Ethiopia: Professor worked in the town for 40 years – then he was executed in front of his house](#)

As professor of peace/conflict studies, colleague Kjetil Tronvoll was invited to hold a lecture on the civil war in Ethiopia at the University of South Carolina (US). The lecture was cancelled by the university due to pressure from political activists supporting the Abiy Ahmed's warfare. In a widely circulated letter (<https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1466102267103297541>), Kjetil concludes that the Ethiopian regime and its affiliates threaten academic freedom globally.

In the US, after Howard University, [Yale University disinvited Ann Fitz-Gerald](#) from a panel discussion on the civil war in Ethiopia. A major reason is that Fitz-Gerald is far too intimate with the ENDF (Ethiopian Army) – to say the least. In a project document, dating from 2012 ([http://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati\\_documents/3474735.odt](http://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati_documents/3474735.odt)), Fitz-Gerald (then at Cranfield University) obtained funding from the British government (HMG) for a security-related training programme in Ethiopia, because "Ann FitzGerald – is extremely well-connected to the security sector (...). The

evidence is strong.” Back in October, [Fitz-Gerald had already actively lobbied for the cancellation](#) of a panel discussion on “Understanding the Implications of War on Children and Families in Tigray,” at her own Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada.

## **6. The fate of Tigrayans and Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa and Nairobi**

Some of our colleagues had the opportunity to visit the Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa; with permission, this is a summary of their internal report.

Eritrean refugees are more afraid in Ethiopia since Eritrean president Issayas and Ethiopia’s PM Abiy have become "friends", and fear kidnapping or killing by what everyone believes are Isayas’ spies, if they criticise Issayas. In this situation, they do not speak out against Abiy either, and blame the present situation on TPLF-TDF.

Tigrayans were already arrested during our stay in Addis but this intensified after the state of emergency. These arrests have an element of extortion to it. For instance, three kebele (local) officials of Tigrayan origin were arrested, but then released again after a few days by paying 10,000 birr each. Of course, they don't get a receipt for such payments. Two other Tigrayans, who both work in a private company, had to pay 60,000 birr each to be released (within 5 days). As has also been mentioned by others, people don't get an official declaration of why they are imprisoned. Lately, women with babies are also locked up - and not everyone is able to pay their way out again. Many Tigrayans in Addis have gone into hiding. Those who can't hide are being coerced into participating to demonstrations against TPLF (<https://twitter.com/RAbdiAnalyst/status/1467375579221667846>). Also the government-aligned [Fana BC report](#) does not do an effort to hide that participants are forced to participate in such staged events. They are mainly women (their husbands being in concentration camps), looking depressed and trying to hide their faces.

In areas with many Eritreans in Addis, it was normal to hear Tigrinya spoken in the streets before the state of emergency was introduced on 2 November 2021. In the present situation, Eritreans also risk being arrested and keep quiet in public. Both Tigrayans and Eritreans stay inside as much as possible.

In Addis Ababa, our colleagues also observed that of the hundreds of building projects all over the town, all except a few have stopped working. There have not been any loans available from banks since August this year.

A Tigrayan businessman, Samson Teklemichael, was kidnapped in Nairobi on 29 November and remains missing. A [video footage](#) shows the incident in broad daylight with police collaborating to his abduction. There is strong fear among the community in Kenya that the businessman might have been taken to Ethiopia. [Axumite Media](#), a growing media established by a group of Tigrayan journalists, broadcasted from Nairobi via virtual, written and radio programmes also announced on 4 December to have quitted operation for security reasons (<https://twitter.com/wldgrgs23/status/1467093925185921028>).

### Related media articles:

- The Globe and Mail, 8 November 2021: [‘They just vanished’: Tigrayans disappear for months in secret Ethiopian detention camps](#)
- Globe News Net, 7 November 2021: [A courageous singer destroys a rally for war by singing peace](#)
- Video of Dishta Gina’s speech in Addis, with English subtitles: [https://twitter.com/aa\\_tze/status/1457323029009154052](https://twitter.com/aa_tze/status/1457323029009154052)
- Kerknet: 21 November 2021: [Etnische zuiveringen in Addis Abeba](#) [in Dutch]]
- The Guardian, 12 November 2021: [Foreign citizens caught up in crackdown on Tigrayans in Ethiopia](#)
- De Standaard, 12 November 2021: [Ethiopië arresteert honderden Tigreeërs en VN-personeel](#) [in Dutch] – English translation: [Ethiopia arrests hundreds of Tigrayans and UN personnel](#)
- AFP, 7 November 2021: [Mass arrests of Tigrayans sow fear in Ethiopia](#)
- See this video of Tigrayans taken from their homes in Addis Ababa and brought to concentration camps: <https://twitter.com/RasSoloM2/status/1459263382327107594>
- GAROWE ONLINE, 20 November: [Tigrayan businessman abducted in Nairobi, still missing](#)
- Governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States, 6 December 2021: [Joint Statement on Detentions in Ethiopia](#)

### 7. The new panafricanism?

Following months of discrediting international media, a narrative has been launched in Ethiopia that the US would be pro-TPLF, and the war against Tigray all of a sudden claimed to be “anti-imperialist”.

Reversely, progressive US Rep. Ilhan Omar calls for an arms embargo on Ethiopia (1 December 2021): <https://twitter.com/Ilhan/status/1466139391038996483>

### Related media and opinion articles:

- The Progressive Magazine, 18 November 2021: [U.S. Officials Move to Save Repressive Ethiopian Leader from Rebel Advance](#)
- Millete Berhanemeskel: “Ethiopians have tried to pervert Pan Africanism and shame westerners from speaking against genocide.” (<https://twitter.com/GualJegantu/status/1462296715449421824>)
- The “panafricanism” myth has been dissected by @sirarwa in this twitter thread: <https://twitter.com/sirarwa/status/1456281519639703557> .
- Bethany Jackson: “Hands off Ethiopia so we can commit genocide” ([https://twitter.com/beti\\_jackson/status/1462950251858325507](https://twitter.com/beti_jackson/status/1462950251858325507))
- Adisalem Desta: [Africanizing the Genocidal War on Tigray](#)
- IPS, 25 November: [Ethiopia’s Civil War Fueled by Weapons from UN’s Big Powers](#)



## 8. Recent opinion pieces

- Mehari Taddele Maru: [There is need for a truly independent probe into Ethiopia abuses](#)
- Helen Clark, Michael Lapsley and David Alton: [The warning signs are there for genocide in Ethiopia – the world must act to prevent it](#)
- Magdalene Abraha: [There's a brutal conflict in Ethiopia. My family there ask: why does no one hear us?](#)
- Adisalem Desta: [Africanizing the Genocidal War on Tigray](#)
- Seifudein Adem: [Why Ethiopia Should Trust the West](#) (Foreign Policy)
- Mirjam Van Reisen: [Eritrea's role in the origins of the Tigray war](#)
- Sara Mengistab: [Understanding the Complicated Relationship Between Eritrea and Tigray](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Ethiopia: Salvaging a failing state](#)
- Global Rights Defenders, 15 November 2021: Podcast Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel: ['I No Longer Call Myself Ethiopian'](#)
- Sabine Küster-Reeck: [Die Entwicklung Dr. Abiy Ahmeds vom Hoffnungsträger zum Autokraten und Kriegsherrn](#) [in German]
- Alex De Waal: [Tigray is starving, it is time for the UN to act](#)
- Awol Allo (NYT): [Ethiopia Is Spiraling, and There's One Man's Mistake Behind It](#)
- Bishop Abune Tesflassie Medhin: [Statement of the catholic Diocese of Adigrat on the Current War-Impact Situation in Tigray](#)

## 9. Other media articles

- The Telegraph, 28 November 2021: [Briton released from death row accused of inciting genocide in Ethiopia](#)
- Le Soir, 19 November 2021: [Ethiopie: une année de guerre dans la province du Tigré a miné la stabilité du pays](#) [in French] – Translation : [Stability undermined by the Tigray conflict](#)
- MoneyCentral (Nigeria), 10 November 2021: [Dangote Cement's \\$500m Ethiopia Plant at Risk as War Escalates](#)
- Freedom of Religion or Belief, 4 November 2021: [365 days and counting: The international community still needs to end the suffering of Tigray](#)
- Rest of World, 13 November 2021: [Why Facebook keeps failing in Ethiopia](#)
- BBC, 23 November 2021: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: What are Facebook and Twitter doing about hate speech?](#)
- The Conversation, 1 November 2021: [Decades of progress gone in one year: Tigray's healthcare system has been destroyed](#)
- Channel4, 23 November 2021: [Ethiopia's border fight: The war against al-Shabaab](#)
- JusticeInfo, 18 November 2021: [War in Ethiopia: What chance of justice for serious crimes?](#)
- Gerjon's Aircraft Finds, 20 November 2021: [Ethiopian Cargo: suspicious flights from Turkey, the UAE and China](#)
- Daily Maverick (South Africa), 22 November 2021: [Four scenarios and the funeral\(s\): Ethiopian powder keg is ready to explode in tragic ways](#)
- CBC, 25 November 2021: [With Ethiopia on the brink, Canada warns citizens to leave immediately](#)



- AFP, 15 November 2021: [US nationals in Ethiopia warned: No Afghan-style evacuation](#)
- Destruction of the Tekeze hydropower substation on 30 November by the Ethiopian Air Force. This was the major source of electricity for the entire Tigray region. [https://twitter.com/Gerjon\\_/status/1466419555790635010](https://twitter.com/Gerjon_/status/1466419555790635010); <https://twitter.com/Quen10Tarantino/status/1466648809249722368>
- Il Fatto Quotidiano, 14 November 2021: [Etiopia, "don Cesare Bullo ascoltato dalla polizia ma non è in arresto". Rilasciato dopo 8 giorni l'operatore umanitario Alberto Livoni](#) [in Italian]
- The Nation (Kenya), 13 November 2021: [Police officers recalled to curb spillover of Ethiopia war](#)
- The Wire China, 14 November 2021: [Stalled Dreams](#) - With debts unpaid and Ethiopia on the brink of collapse, China's decades-old Africa strategy may be starting to change.
- Aljazeera, 3 November: [Ethiopia's escalating conflict and allegations of war crimes](#)
- The Guardian, 16 November: [Scores of children killed by starvation in Tigray, says health official](#)
- Radio France internationale, 4 November: [G rard Prunier: en  thiopie, «il faut multilat raliser le changement de r gime»](#) [in French]
- Nouvelles de Djibouti, 17 November: [The Djiboutian regime wants to send its soldiers to Mille](#)
- BBC, 3 November: [Facebook deletes Ethiopia PM's post that urged citizens to 'bury' rebels](#)
- FranceInfo, 3 November 2021: [Rapport de l'ONU sur le conflit en Ethiopie : "Personne ne prendra en compte ce rapport", regrette un sp cialiste](#) [in French]
- Meridiano42 is an Italian news site about the Horn of Africa. See its' regular updates [in English](#) and [in Italian](#)
- PBS Newshour, 12 November 2021: [U.N. says Ethiopia to ease blockade of aid for Tigray, but no official agreement in sight](#)
- Reuters, 3 November 2021: [Bachelet says violations ongoing in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- SABC News, 12 November 2021: [Conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region could have been avoided: Kgalema Motlanthe](#)
- Sudans Post, 9 November 2021: [South Sudan to evacuate almost 60 students in Ethiopia's Amhara region amid rebel advance](#)
- The Guardian, 12 November 2021: [Foreign citizens caught up in crackdown on Tigrayans in Ethiopia](#)
- Vatican News, November 2021: [Ethiopia: Salesian missionaries arrested in Addis Ababa](#)
- Oryx Spioenkop, 13 November 2021: [Deadly Ineffective: Chinese-Made Wing Loong UAVs Designate Targets For Ethiopian Su-27 Bombers](#)
- RTBF, La Premi re, 7 November 2021 : [Interview de Jan Nyssen concernant le conflit en Ethiopie](#) [in French] (6 premi res minutes   partir de 08:16)
- Bloomberg, 3 November 2021 : [Armed Raids in Northwest Ethiopia Fill Camps With Displaced](#)
- Amnesty International Belgique, 24 November 2021: [Dossier : Conflit au Tigr ](#) [in French]
- AFP Fact check, 8 November 2021 : [These images do not show Argentinian and Nigerian troops helping Tigrayan rebels in Ethiopia](#)
- RFI, 24 November 2021 : [ thiopie: le gouvernement recrute de nouveaux soldats \(RFI\)](#) [in French]
- Aljazeera, 25 November 2021: [UAE air bridge provides military support to Ethiopia gov't](#)

## Digest 36. **Due to the blockade, patients die in the hands of doctors (5 January 2022)**

First of all, our best wishes for 2022 and ርሑስ በዓል ልደት – may we soon see peace in Tigray and Ethiopia as a whole!

In this digest, we address the ongoing extreme famine and starvation in Tigray (section 1) and the new edition of the “Tigray: Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation” (section 2). On the diplomatic front, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution establishing an international commission to conduct an investigation into allegations of human rights violations, and the USA terminated Ethiopia’s access to its preferential trade programme AGOA as the Ethiopian government failed to address the issue of gross human rights violations raised in November 2021 (section 3). We also highlight the peace or ceasefire diplomacy taking place (section 4), as well as the political life within Tigray (section 5). We end with some unexpected bottom-up history (a serial, a cartoon and some newly discovered maps - section 6), followed by opinion pieces (section 7) and media articles (section 8).

### 1. Famine and starvation due to blockade

From the USAID assessment: “Ethiopia is projected to face record levels of **food insecurity** during 2022, with the greatest needs concentrated in conflict-affected areas of northern Ethiopia. Insecurity and a critical shortage of supplies and fuel continue to hinder food assistance. No convoys carrying humanitarian aid reached Tigray’s capital city of Mekelle between December 15 and 30, exacerbating the already dire need for assistance.”

Also, Tigray’s **healthcare system** has completely collapsed. Patients die in the hands of doctors at the best hospitals in Mekelle, for sake of lack of medical supplies; even expired medicines have been used and are exhausted now. See the [statement by Doctors and other Health Professionals of Ayder Hospital](#) – College of Health Sciences, Mekelle University (4 January 2022).

#### Related articles:

- USAID, 30 December 2021: [Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Crisis Fact Sheet #3 Fiscal Year 2022](#)
- Bistandsaktuelt, 15 December 2021: [Tigray-krigen: – En planlagt sultkatastrofe](#) [in Norwegian]
- Globe News Net, 1 January 2022: [USAID warns worsening humanitarian situation in Tigray with continued blockade and forced eviction in Western Tigray](#)
- TMH, 1 January 2022: [Interview Dr Meskelu Kidu on the health system in Tigray \[in Tigrinya\]](#)

### 2. Atlas

By the end of December, version 2.2 of the “[Tigray: Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation](#)” has been published. Besides updated maps, there also are some new maps (and corresponding explanatory texts) in the Atlas:

- Gold and base metal potential; exploration concessions of foreign companies in Tigray – as for some countries the permanency of their concessions seems to override concerns for human rights
  - Occurrence of massacres in the Tigray War up to 16 November 2021, contrasted to sites visited by the joint EHRC-UNHRC investigation
  - Occurrence of massacres & conflict incidents in the Tigray and Amhara Regions in Ethiopia
  - Distribution of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) due to the Tigray War at the end of August 2021
- The Tigray Atlas team continues working on the online georeferenced database of massacres and civilian victims: [www.ethiopiaticigraywar.com](http://www.ethiopiaticigraywar.com) and on the associated [booklet](#).

We also admire a very professional Ethiopia-Tigray conflict map by Dzsihad Hadelli: <https://twitter.com/dhadelli/status/1477289122180050944>

### 3. Diplomacy

On 17 December 2021, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution establishing an international commission of experts on Ethiopia, to conduct an investigation into allegations of human rights violations and abuses by all parties to the conflict. ([https://twitter.com/UN\\_HRC/status/1471855119096549389](https://twitter.com/UN_HRC/status/1471855119096549389)). The resolution was adopted despite intense diplomatic pressure by the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments. Hosting AU headquarters, the Ethiopian diplomats particularly targeted the African countries. Nevertheless, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, Sudan and Togo resisted the pressure from the Abiy Ahmed regime and abstained during the vote.

The US has repeatedly warned the Ethiopian government about “the gross violations of internationally recognised human rights being perpetrated by the government of Ethiopia and other parties”. Here, we were even desperate about the never-ending repetition of messages of “greatest concerns”. Finally, belated action has been taken by 1 January 2022; the [US has removed Ethiopia from its preferential trade programme](#). Concerns for employment expressed by economic decisionmakers sound fake – we never saw them concerned about the levels of the textile workers’ salaries – 0.5 USD per day! What they will miss is the hard currency generated by the trade of cheap and unethically produced clothes.

Also, the Joe Biden administration [penalised Ethiopia for its democratic backsliding](#), and withheld hundreds of millions of dollars of MCC money (Millennium Challenge Corporation).

#### Related media articles:

- The East African, 28 December 2021: [Pan-Africanism or impunity? The divisive Tigray crimes issue](#)
- The East African, 3 January 2022: [Guinea, Mali, and Ethiopia removed from US trade programme](#)
- CNN, 24 December 2021: [Ethiopia to lose access to lucrative US trade program following CNN investigation](#)
- The Africa Report, 16 December 2021: [US picks Zambia for massive MCC grant, suspends Ethiopia](#)
- The World, 22 December 2021: [Fighting continues in Ethiopia amid UN call for human rights probe](#)
- Tony Magaña: [Tigray genocide is following same tragic inaction by UN and AU as Rwanda genocide](#)

- RFI, 2 January 2021: [Les États-Unis excluent Éthiopie, Mali et Guinée de l'accord commercial Agoa](#) [in French]
- Reuters, 30 December 2021: [Impoverished Ethiopia seeks extra \\$2.5 bln to rebuild from war](#)

#### 4. Peace? Or at least: peace talks?

Somehow frontlines have stabilised over the last weeks along Tigray's borders (except for Western Tigray), although ethnic cleansing and drone attacks on Tigray continue to take place. Yet, there is an understanding that peace or ceasefire diplomacy currently is taking place. Major media and opinion articles in this regard are:

- The Washington Post, 31 December 2021: [As the tide of war in Ethiopia turns, a chance for peace talks opens](#)
- Michael Horton: [The Window for a Negotiated Settlement in Ethiopia's War is Closing as the Country Faces Protracted Civil War](#)
- International Crisis Group: [A Rare Chance for Peace in Ethiopia](#)
- Le Soir, 28 December 2021: [Corne de l'Afrique: un espoir de paix se dessine en Éthiopie](#) [in French]
- Kjetil Tronvoll : [Peace, or continued war in Ethiopia?](#)
- John Young: [Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed: From poster-boy of the West to poster-boy of the Left](#)
- Mistir Sew: [Now is the time to silence Ethiopia's guns](#)
- Democracy in Africa, 27 December 2021: [Peace, or continued war in Ethiopia?](#)

#### 5. Tigray's political landscape

When talking about Tigrayan politics, friends and foes focus on one party only, i.e. the TPLF. However, in addition to civil society organisations, there are several opposition parties in Tigray, having their political position on the causes and consequences of the war, humanitarian situation, governance in Ethiopia, political re-organisation of Tigray, peace negotiations, and security and territorial integrity of the region. For instance, General Tekleberhan Woldearegay (Tigray Defence Forces) hinted at the existence of political differentiation in Tigray: <https://twitter.com/tklebrhanw/status/1475205398672166922>, and in a joint press release, the three Tigray autonomist parties demanded involvement in the peace negotiations: <https://twitter.com/HailuKebede/status/1476575069698678789/photo/1>.

Since a couple of months, interviews in Tigrinya that TMH TV has broadcasted, for instance of [Hayalu Godefay](#) (Sawot party), [Mehari Yohannes](#) (Tigray Independence Party), and [Kidane Amene](#) (Baytona Party) - all three members of the TDF - make their distinct positions clear concerning the fate of Tigray.

On 23 December, the Global Society of Tigray Scholars pleaded also for "a broad-based inclusive consultation among all Tigrayan stakeholders including the political parties, youth, women, scholars, religious leaders, civil society and minority ethnic communities".

It would be interesting to have a political analyst writing a comprehensive review of these and other similar discussions in Tigray.

## 6. Some bottom-up history

To stay in touch with Tigray's history, our colleague Prof. Eloi Ficquet republished **Ras Wolde-Selassié's Adventurous Youth** (around 1800) [in the form of a serial](#). Note that this was written before the scramble for Africa! Eloi published the first issue. It is possible to [subscribe in order to get the next issues](#) of the serial.

Then, just out, "Stichproben", the Vienna Journal of African Studies has published: **Tigray Tragedy** - A graphic essay by Manuel João Ramos (Department of Anthropology - University Institute of Lisbon), representing the views of different actors in the conflict. <https://stichproben.univie.ac.at/en/all-issues/stichproben-no-412021/> - holding [introductory words](#), [graphic essay](#) (cartoon), and an [interview with the author](#).

Colleagues also retrieved a couple of **maps of the Horn published around 1850** (again, before Tigray got divided as part of the Scramble for Africa) – hope to see it re-published soon!

## 7. Opinion pieces

- Mistir Sew: [The Ethiopian blueprint for a limitless war on Tigrayans](#)
- Alex De Waal: [How foreign drone intervention and more turned tide for Abiy in Ethiopia](#)
- Mehari Taddele Maru: [Joint UN, Ethiopia Atrocities Report: Poison Fruit of Poisonous Tree](#)
- Tsadkan Gebretensae: [Pertinent Issues on the War in Tigray](#)
- Manuel João Ramos: [A tragédia etíope e o autismo português](#) [in Portuguese]

## 8. Other articles in the media

- The Washington Post, 30 December 2021: [She was in Abiy Ahmed's cabinet as war broke out. Now she wants to set the record straight.](#)
- The Times, 31 December 2021: [Ethiopia's war turns into a testing ground for the deadliest drones](#)
- BBC, 27 December 2021: [My art channels the pain from Ethiopia's war](#)
- RFI, 31 December 2021: [UN reports record number of civilians killed in airstrikes across Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- Bloomberg, 4 January 2021: [More Than 140 People Killed in Air Strikes in Northern Ethiopia Since October](#)

## Digest 37.      **Blockade, famine and starvation (12 February 2022)**

With the ongoing blockade, famine and starvation in Tigray (section 1), it is urgent to show our concerns to the world's public opinion and decision makers. There will be a **public demonstration** in Brussels on Thursday 17 February (afternoon) on the occasion of the European Union – African Union summit. Ethiopia's PM Abiy is attending the summit, in spite of the continued blockade on Tigray (see below). This is in contrast with the leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea, who have not been invited as the AU has suspended these countries' membership because of military coups.

See all details of the appeal for the demonstration, to **urge the EU, the AU and the international community to act now**: [https://mobile.twitter.com/emnet\\_negash/status/1491919237161566208](https://mobile.twitter.com/emnet_negash/status/1491919237161566208)

### **1. Famine and starvation**

Tigray continues to be blockaded. Crops have been harvested now, but according to field observations done by Mekelle University geographers, and in line with FEWSNET estimates, harvest would be only 25-50% of the normal harvest. This food will be consumed soon.

The food shortages are the base for an extreme human health crisis.

In these conditions, ICRC gets through with now daily flights with medical aid, and now also WHO, but food aid continues to be almost totally blockaded.

A short review of the status along the main access routes to Tigray (in clockwise order, starting from north):

- Massawa – Addi Kwala – Adwa: closed by Eritrea
- Massawa – Senafe – Adigrat: closed by Eritrea
- Assab – Semera – Ab'ala/Weldiya – Mekelle: closed at times by Afar authorities, multiple check points by the Ethiopian government, and since two weeks, mainly by major warfare
- Djibouti – Semera – Ab'ala – Mekelle: closed by Ethiopia and frequent warfare
- Djibouti/Addis – Weldiya – Alamata – Mekelle: closed by Amhara region
- Dessie – Lalibela – Sekota – Korem/Yechila – Mekelle: closed by Amhara Region
- Bahir Dar – Debark – May Tsebri – Shire: closed by Amhara Region
- Bahir Dar – Gondar – Dansha – Addi Remets – Shire: only accessible up to Addi Remets; further on closed by ENDF and Amhara militias
- Bahir Dar – Gondar – May Kadra – Humera – Shire: closed by ENDF, EDF and Amhara
- Port Sudan – May Kadra – Humera – Shire: closed by Ethiopia
- Port Sudan – Tesseney – Shire: closed by Eritrea

This is why we say that Tigray is under a mediaeval siege, with the aim of starving the population.

However, Article 54 of the 1977 Protocol of the 1949 **Geneva Conventions**

“prohibits attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless [of] objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as food, provisions, agricultural areas for production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, supplies and drinking water installations and irrigation works”

Yet, this is exactly what we have seen in the Tigray war. Everything mentioned in that protocol has been applied by the Eritrean and Ethiopian troops in Tigray.

#### **Additional sources**

- The most recent [IPC report](#). UN News, 14 January 2022: [Tigray: Aid operations ‘about to grind to a halt’, warns WFP](#)
- Le Monde, 11 February 2022: Ethiopie : [l’ONU contrainte de réduire ses opérations humanitaires dans la région du Tigré](#) [in French]
- National Catholic Reporter, 24 January 2022: [As war continues in Ethiopia's Tigray region, Catholic relief programs struggle](#)
- Bistandsaktuelt, 21 January 2022: [Krigens Etiopia: Slik lever sivilbefolkningen under blokaden](#) [in Norwegian] – translation: [War-torn Ethiopia: How the civilian population lives under the blockade](#)
- Globe News Net, 7 January 2021: [Ethiopia’s 1984/85 ‘Poster Child’ writes moving letter to Sir Bob Geldof about the blockade, man-made famine and hunger in Tigray](#)
- World Peace Foundation, 7 February 2022: [Mekelle: a city under siege](#) - a three part essay by Mulugeta Gebrehiwot, describing how the war has fundamentally altered life in Tigrayan capital city, Mekelle.
- AFP, 20 January 2022: [Food Aid At 'All-time Low' In Ethiopia's Tigray: UN](#)
- Devex, 18 January 2022: Tigray: [The deliberate destruction of a health system](#)
- Meron Gebreanaye, Saba Mah'derom, Kiros Teklay & Wintana Tsegai: [Tigray needs aid now, with or without the Ethiopian government’s consent](#)

#### **2. Scientific articles about the humanitarian situation in Tigray**

- Dyer O., 2022. [Tigray’s hospitals lack necessities as relief supplies are blocked, say doctors](#). BMJ, 376:o34
- Dannenbaum, T., 2022. [Siege Starvation: A War Crime of Societal Torture](#). Chicago Journal of International Law, 22.
- Clarfield, A Mark et al., 2022. [An appeal to world leaders: health care for Ethiopians](#). The Lancet, 399 (10323): 433.
- Afework Mulugeta, Mulugeta Gebregziabher, 2022: [Saving children from man-made acute malnutrition in Tigray, Ethiopia: a call to action](#). The Lancet Global Health.



### 3. Fate of Tigrayans in Ethiopia

Many Tigrayan prisoners have been released in Addis Ababa. We are happy to learn that several of our friends are free now.

Yet, to understand the context, move forward in this video ([https://youtu.be/dV\\_GFx3YJg0](https://youtu.be/dV_GFx3YJg0)) to 54:00; you will hear Abiy Ahmed explaining the releases of prisoners (in Amharic) in the context of upcoming AU and EU summits. The West seems to be easily charmed by his attempts to look "nice"... In our understanding, the release of Tigrayan prisoners is a superficial strategy in order to turn critical Western voices.

Many Tigrayans are still in prison yet; here some testimonies by people who have been released over the last weeks.

"I was released yesterday. I am fine and glad to be out. I was held in a cement warehouse and very difficult conditions for 800 people. About half released yesterday. But I feel uncertain that I could be picked up again. While in there, I had no news at all. I felt our lives were at threat also." (man, 38 years old)

"I have a problem now. I have been imprisoned for 2 months. I am very sick. I'm being called to the hospital because of the beating. The police have no problem beating. I have not paid my six-month rent. If my landlord rented me out, I would be out on the street. I want to travel to the Middle East to work as a house maid, that is better than Addis." (woman, 22 years old)

"I am a staff member of Addis Ababa University and I have been released from arbitrary jailing. It has been a great relief. It looks like the government is now releasing the unlawfully imprisoned people in mass as they arrested them in mass in the first place. This is a real time "dystopian" scenario. I do not know who arrested me (I mean the institution) and I do not know who released me. I had not been to court and charged with anything. No one told me what the reasons for my arrest were. They arbitrarily jailed us and they arbitrarily released us."

"This is just to let you know, I have been released from prison. I was very sick in prison from pneumonia, but now I am better." (man, 35 years)

Mistir Sew: [Diary of an arbitrary detention in Ethiopia](#) (Ethiopia Insight)

### 4. Opinion pieces

- Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 15 December 2021: [Time for Action on Ethiopia](#)
- Bobby Ghosh (Bloomberg): [Biden Must Hold Ethiopia's Abiy Accountable](#)
- Awol Allo: [Ethiopia's National Dialogue Needs to Include Everyone](#)



- AlJazeera: debate Awol Allo, Adam Abebe and Kjetil Tronvoll: “Does Ethiopia's PM want a peaceful end to the Tigray war?” <https://youtu.be/Oea-lRo1z98>
- Kjetil Tronvoll: Have the Tables Turned in the Tigray War? - [Podcast](#)
- Berte Gebreyohanes: [Sobre el genocidio en Tigray](#) [in Spanish]
- John Young: [Bolshevism and National Federalism in Ethiopia](#). *The Nation State*, p.55.
- Michael Rubin: [Did Joe Biden Inadvertently Greenlight Genocide in Ethiopia?](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll, Mohamed Kheir Omer, 21 January 2022: [Do sanctions work ? The case of Eritrea says “no”](#)
- Milkessa M. Gemechu: [How Abiy Ahmed Betrayed Oromia and Endangered Ethiopia](#)
- Hagos Godifay: [Data shows siege and destruction of health system are causing preventable deaths in Tigray](#)
- Mulugeta Gebregziabher: [The US is pushing for peace in Ethiopia, but it needs to do more](#)
- Daniel Kibret, Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed's social affairs advisor: Public call for genocide. The original video has been removed for violating YouTube's Community Guidelines. [See the English transcript](#).

## 5. For those who understand French

Mehdi Labzaé, Marianne Saddier, « [Sur les réseaux sociaux, jeu de dupes autour de la guerre du Tigray](#) », *Afrique XXI*, 15 décembre 2021. [in French] – in summary: On Ethiopian government's self-discovered “anti-imperialism” - in Tigray, it are Africans who die from starvation and bombing. And: Ethiopia's history is also one of internal imperialism of a state that has violently colonised its peripheries.

Médiapart, 23 January 2021 : [Éthiopie, de la guerre civile au nettoyage ethnique](#) [video interview in French] Le sociologue Mehdi Labzaé et l'historien Paulos Asfaha dissèquent les mécaniques du conflit qui déchire le nord de l'Éthiopie depuis novembre 2020. (<https://twitter.com/Mediapart/status/1484489959130247175>)

**Paulos Asfaha**, is a historian at the Global Studies Institute of the University of Geneva (Switzerland), with research focus on the history of economic and social development in Ethiopia post-WW2. Among others, he published this opinion piece: [Un Prix Nobel de la paix qui s'en va en guerre](#)

**Mehdi Labzaé** is a French sociologist who particularly studies the Amhara nationalist movements. At the outbreak of the war he was in Gonder, interviewing *fano* militia members. He also travelled several times through western Tigray in 2021 and was direct witness of massacres and ethnic cleansing. Hopefully we will soon see an English translation of his article « [Ethiopie. Dans l'Ouest du Tigray, un nettoyage ethnique à huis-clos](#) », *Afrique XXI*, 8 décembre 2021.

Interviewer is journalist **Justine Brabant**, who earlier on published this article on French arms sales to Ethiopia: « [En Ethiopie, la France partagée entre business et défense des droits humains](#) », *Médiapart*, 21 janvier 2021.

## 6. Other media articles

- Deutsche Welle, 12 February 2022: [UN deputy chief shaken by Ethiopian conflict's impact on women](#)
- Vatican News, 28 December 2021: [Ethiopian Bishops renew call for peace](#)
- Morgenbladet, 7 January 2021: [Han er årets verste statsleder](#) [in Norwegian] - English translation: [He's the worst head of state of the year](#)
- Associated Press, 11 January 2022: [Ethiopian drone strike kills 17 on day of Biden-Abiy call](#)
- The Star (Kenya), 13 January 2022: [Nobel Prize board urges Abiy to end Ethiopia war](#)
- New Lines Magazine, 19 January 2022: [The UN's Purbblind Human Rights Reporting in Ethiopia](#)
- BBC Focus on Africa, 21 January 2022: [Evidence of Somali troops fighting in Ethiopia](#) (audio)
- Africa Confidential, 20 January 2022: [ETHIOPIA - After concessions, rival armies fight on](#)
- Politico, 25 January 2022: [Evidence from civilian bombing in Ethiopia points to Turkish drone](#)
- Der Spiegel, 13 January 2022: [Krieg ohne Ende](#) [in German]
- Associated Press, 26 January 2022: [Diaspora group: Ethiopia PM open to talks with Tigray forces](#)
- CNN, 25 January 2022: Nobel body issues rare admission to Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed: <https://twitter.com/ZainAsher/status/1485751476156780545>
- Addis Standard, 17 January 2022: [No sign of redress for Karrayyu Abba Gadaas executed by Oromia police despite state minister, MP named culprits](#)
- Reuters, 23 January 2022: [Ethiopian army planning to 'eliminate' Tigrayan forces -military official](#)
- MSN, 2 December 2021: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict has impacted an unlikely group—hundreds of Indian professors](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 20 January 2022: [Somali troops committed atrocities in Tigray as new alliance emerged, survivors say](#)
- Al Jazeera, 3 February 2022: [Can Abiy Ahmed's national dialogue end Ethiopia's war?](#) (UGent colleague Emnet Negash had a one-minute intervention, at 15:30 minutes, followed by an appraisal by the Crisis Group's William Davison)
- Panorama, 4 February 2022: [Italy suspends military cooperation with Ethiopia](#)
- The Guardian, 8 February 2022: [Ethiopia accused of 'serious' human rights abuses in Tigray in landmark case](#)

## Digest 38. **First estimate: half a million civilian victims? (13 March 022)**

It is difficult times, with even more warfare in the world. This digest touches upon similarities between the Ukraine and Tigray wars (section 5), while focusing on the mortality induced by the Tigray war (section 1); as an example, we also try to grasp all that has happened in one of Tigray's districts, around Hagere Selam over the last 16 months (section 2). We further highlight a fundraiser for women and girls survivors of rape and sexual violence in Tigray (section 3). The last sections are dedicated to scientific publications on the impact of the war in Tigray (section 4), media articles (section 6) and opinion pieces (section 7).

### **1. Tigray war mortality: half a million people?**

We often get questions on numbers of deaths due to this war. It is very difficult to know due to near-absence of communication as well as the blackmailing of NGOs who have a partial view of the situation, but do not speak out for fear of being banned from working in Ethiopia.

With the assistance of citizen scientist Tim Vanden Bempt, we made the assessment that so far there are between 150,000 and 200,000 starvation deaths, 50,000 to 100,000 victims of direct killings, and more than 100,000 additional deaths due to lack of health care.

The starvation deaths are based on the figures of the IPC – Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (400,000 people in famine, May/June 2021) and USAID (900,000 in famine, June 2021). The situation is probably much more extreme now than it was then, but humanitarian aid during the summer months and the autumn harvests have apparently provided a welcome respite. The [WFP was able to do a fairly extensive study](#) that is downright terrifying. The harvest would be exhausted by April and if the humanitarian blockade remains, up to 50% of the population could be left without access to food.

The number of deaths due to lack of health care is based on the excess mortality that it generates. In normal circumstances, an average of 6 people per 1000 inhabitants die in Ethiopia in a year, according to [an instructive curve](#) prepared by the World Bank. During the conflict months of November 2020 to June 2021, we estimated that there were 20 deaths per 1000 people and starting with the total blockade 32 per 1000. Twenty out of 1000 was the rate of health-related deaths in 1984-85, before the improvements in the Ethiopian health system. [According to Dr. Tony Magaña](#), this number has risen to 32 deaths per 1,000 since the blockade started. The excess mortality was then calculated, not on the entire population but on the total of 3.9 million people in need of medical care according to [OCHA](#).

Of the number of soldiers killed we have no idea. The tallied number of civilian direct casualties is at least 10,000. Probably they amount to 50,000 - 100,000, as there are many reports of civilian corpses "seen along the way when fleeing", without mentioning location, date, numbers,...

There is a possible partial overlap between the categories. Yet, in the worst-case scenario there would be half a million civilian deaths.

The fact that the UN was not allowed to transport documentation material (USB drives, phones, cameras, etc.) from and to Tigray for a very long time (and even now), has meant that the situation in Tigray is very poorly documented. Journalists who could report about the situation on the ground are not allowed to travel to Tigray.

Farmers are really nearing the margin. Individual accounts witness that in many parts of Tigray people have run out of food, sold their valuables, and now abandon their homes in search of food. There is no clear view of where they go. In normal times people would go to urban areas, which is not possible these days as the situation is even worse in urban areas. Sadly, human trafficking including to Addis Ababa, is also emerging as a business. The desperation is to the level that people have started crossing the borders to Amhara region in search of food for survival. That sounds like the toughest decision to make, as the Amhara region is considered a stronghold for interests conflicting those of the Tigrayan people.

ACAPS ([www.acaps.org](http://www.acaps.org)) has published a very detailed thematic report: Tigray Region: Drivers of Food Insecurity and Outlook (1 March 2022). If not yet received, it is available upon request.

#### **More information on the same topic:**

- OCHA, 10 March 2022: [Humanitarian partners continue to reduce their operations in Tigray due to lack of supplies, fuel, and cash](#).
- Catholic News Service, 3 March 2022: [New report highlights Tigray atrocities, says Ethiopia could face famine](#)
- The Guardian, 2 March 2022: [Patients dying as conflict prevents supplies reaching Tigray hospitals](#)
- OCHA: [Ethiopia - Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report](#), 17 February 2022
- WHO, 14 February 2022: [Lack of fuel prevents distribution of critically-needed medical supplies in Tigray region](#)

## **2. Example of a small rural area – Hagere Selam and surroundings**

We received this overview of the situation in the Mekelle-Hagere Selam area from people working on the betterment of the humanitarian situation, as well as a historical document on the battle for Hagere Selam.

Right now, the condition is as follows:

- No schooling. All the children would like to be trained, but most of the school materials are destroyed. Every child thinks about the drone and airstrike. They never feel safe.

- More than 90% of health care facilities are destroyed.
- Families are in disarray. No salary for the last eight months. Everybody is looking for aid but can't get it. They are losing their children due to hunger and starvation. They are unable to save their families.
- No medicine. Due to lack of medicine thousands of people are dying. The death rate is extremely high.
- No communication. Instead of calling and messaging through phone, we go back to the old way of communication. We write a letter and ask someone to take it. Most of the time it gets lost somewhere and sometimes it arrives very late.
- No bank. Even if people have money in their account, they are not able to withdraw because there is lack of cash in the bank – any bank communication is blocked and the cash has been looted by Ethiopian troops, when withdrawing from Mekelle, back in June 2021.
- No electricity. The main power line was from Addis Ababa and they cut it off. After they cut it, the Tigray electric power was connected to Tekeze Hydropower. The substation was then hit by drone strike. Again it was repaired. Then the main station in Mekelle was hit. Again they repaired it and so on. Very tiresome.
- No fuel. Transportation costs have increased tremendously.
- Farmers did not harvest as usual. Because the farmlands were not properly ploughed on time and lacked fertilizer.
- Even if you have cash at hand things are quite expensive to buy.
- Every week there is high inflation. For example early February, the [EthioTrees](#) project bought food for the communities. We paid 2800 birr for one quintal (100 kg) of wheat and 4300 birr for 1 quintal of flour but early March it is 3700 birr and 5200 birr for the same amount.
- See a tabulated view of price increases: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6344845>

Then, in one of our [earlier circular letters](#) we informed the outside world about the Hagere Selam massacre; recently Tigray TV has been to the place and made this report: <https://twitter.com/GuaGuaTigray/status/1469063607023554564>

A video has also emerged, showing the strong cooperation between Ethiopian and Eritrean armies in the battle against the Tigray Defence Forces, [on the road between Mekelle and Hagere Selam](#), back in late 2020.

The introduction to the video is in Tigrinya language, as it was broadcast by an Eritrean opposition YouTube channel. They mention that the film looks professionally prepared, not just filmed by an individual with a smartphone. The film was on a video cassette found near a dead soldier in the battle for Lalibela.

In the talk between the Ethiopian and Eritrean commanders, the target of the attack is mentioned several times: Hagere Selam mountain pass, which they eventually conquered.

Amongst the commanders that [are extensively filmed](#), there are most probably also the Ethiopian and Eritrean defence personnel responsible for the massacre in Hagere Selam and surroundings in December 2020, and destruction of the town, as well as massacres in the wider [Ala'isa-Addilal-May Leiba area](#). One Eritrean commander is identified as Brig-Gen. [Haddish Ephrem](#) (who belongs to the Eritrean president Isayas Afewerki's inner circle) and from the Ethiopian side Major-Gen. Zewdu Belay.

#### More information on the same topic:

- Reuters, 2 March 2022: [UN rights forum picks ex-ICC prosecutor to lead Ethiopia abuses investigation](#)
- Meridiano42, 7 March 2022: [Bensouda to head UN commission for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ethiopia](#)
- UNHRC, 2 March 2022: [President of Human Rights Council appoints members of investigative body in Ethiopia](#)
- NewsCentralTV, Nigeria, 4 March 2022. [Atrocities in Ethiopia and the appointment of UN investigators](#) (interviews of Hailu Kebede, Salsay Weyane Tigray party & Dr David Matsanga, African Affairs analyst)
- Tghat, 19 February 2022: [An Ethiopian Soldier from UN Interim Security Force for Abyei \(UNISFA\) to Mahbere Dego Massacre](#)

### 3. Help women and girls survivors of rape and sexual violence in Tigray.

The ongoing genocidal war in Tigray has subjected over 100,000 women and girls to systematic rape and sexual violence. Tseday, 17, told Amnesty International that she was abducted by eight Eritrean soldiers in Zebangedena and held captive for two weeks. She said: “They took me to a rural area, in a field. There were many soldiers; I was raped by eight of them... Usually, they went out to guard the area in two shifts. When four of them went out, the rest stayed and raped me.” This is a story of tens of thousands of girls and women.

Survivors of rape and sexual violence are not getting necessary medical and other support due to the ongoing siege and de-facto humanitarian blockage.

“Kvinner for Kvinner i Tigray (KFK-Women to Women)”, a nonprofit organization based in Norway is currently fundraising to help women and girls survivors restore their lives. KFK is partnering with the Women’s Association of Tigray (WAT), an organization on the ground supporting survivors of sexual violence. WAT plans to organize and provide a training to 205 young women volunteers who will help the survivors in different ways.

Crowdfunding in Norwegian: <https://www.spleis.no/project/214602>

Bank transfers: KVINNER FOR KVINNER, bank account number 1506 74 23000, IBAN NO0212345678910

#### More information on the same topic:

- Addis Standard, 8 March 2022: [Fifteen women’s organizations call on UN for vital services to sexual violence survivors in Tigray](#)

#### 4. New scientific publications related to the Tigray War

- Ephrem Berhe, Paltiel, O., Hailemariam Gebrearegay, Hiluf Ebuy, Mengistu Hagazi, Hale Teka, Afework Mulugeta, 2022. Ethiopia's Tigray dialysis service cut due to dwindling supplies amid war. *Kidney International Reports*, in press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ekir.2022.02.024>
- Favara M, Hittmeyer A, Porter C, Singhal S, Tassew Woldehanna, 2022. [Young people, mental health, and civil conflict: Preliminary findings from Ethiopia's Tigray region](#). *Psychiatry Research Communications*:100025.
- Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2022. [In Tigray Even Research Institutions Are Not Spared: The Plight of Tigray Agricultural Research Institute](#)
- Awet T. Weldemichael, Yibeyin Hagos Yohannes, Meron Estefanos, 2022. [Between a Rock and a Hard Place - Eritrean Refugees in Tigray and the Ethiopian Civil War](#). An IPRA report.

#### 5. Scientists on Tigray and on Ukraine

The international community has rapidly taken a strong stance in opposing Ukraine's invasion. Both Ukraine and Tigray are victims of war crimes committed by governments. We hope now that the international community will also stand up for the 7 million Tigrayans besieged by the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies.

We have noticed how Russian scientists immediately reacted against the war on Ukraine: [https://www.researchgate.net/post/Letter\\_of\\_Russian\\_Scientists](https://www.researchgate.net/post/Letter_of_Russian_Scientists)

Unfortunately, we have not seen a similar move by Ethiopian scientists when the war on Tigray was launched. Ethiopian academic institutions rather actively participated in the war. See this database: [the Ethiopian public universities during the Tigray war](#).

Also in Russia, universities are supporting Putin's war.

In a reaction, on 10 March, the rector of Ghent University (Belgium) mentions that, "Institutional cooperation with Russian universities that support the invasion in Ukraine, and student exchange or cooperation between academics that takes place within that framework, is no longer possible." Let us hope that universities worldwide take a similar stand, also in relation to [Ethiopian universities actively supporting the war on Tigray](#).

#### More information on the same topic:

- Meridiano 42, 7 March 2022: [Eritrea is one of only five countries to openly side with Russia in the UN vote. Risk of further isolation](#).
- NPR, 4 March 2022: [Not every war gets the same coverage as Russia's invasion — and that has consequences](#)

- Maher Mezahi: [Viewpoint on Ukraine: Why African wars get different treatment](#) (BBC)
- Richard Reid: [Eritrea is involved in Tigray to boost its stature. Why the strategy could backfire](#)

## 6. In the media

- RTS, 23 January 2022. Interview of Charlotte Touati: [Ethiopie : la foi d'un pouvoir génocidaire](#) [in French] – Ethiopia: the religion of a genocidal power (podcast)
- Washington Post, 12 March 2022: [In Ethiopia, a video of civilians burned alive sparks anger](#) – see also this Twitter thread by journalist Zecharias Zelalem <https://twitter.com/ZekuZelalem/status/1502430564581888002>
- CNN, 31 January 2022: [Ethiopian Airlines employees are fleeing the country by hiding in the planes they work on](#)
- Brussels Times, 2 February 2022: [Belgium grants asylum to Ethiopian plane stowaways](#)
- AlJazeera, 25 February 2022. 'Ethnic cleansing': Ethiopian allies accused of Abala massacre
- GlobeNewsNet, 8 March 2022: [More Than 300 Civilians Killed in Three Months of Ethiopia Airstrikes: UN](#)
- The Guardian, 20 February 2022: Facebook 'lets vigilantes in Ethiopia incite ethnic killing' <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/feb/20/facebook-lets-vigilantes-in-ethiopia-incite-ethnic-killing>
- Reporter, 20 February 2022: «ወደፊት በትግራይ እንዲህ ያለ ኃላፊነት የሚቀበል ሰው አለ ብዬ አላምንም» ሙሉ ነጋ (ዶ/ር)፣ የቀድሞ የትግራይ ክልል ጊዜያዊ አስተዳደር ዋና ሥራ አስፈጻሚ [in Amharic] - 'I don't believe anyone will accept such responsibility in Tigray in the future', Mulu Nega (Dr.), former chief executive of the Temporary Administration of the Tigray Region. In this interview, Mulu Nega states among others:
  - During the Tigray war, we had intense communications with Eritrean generals, including with general Filipos, who was stationed in Wukro
  - It is not true that the Ethiopian government spent 100 Billion birr to rebuild Tigray in the first half of 2021, like PM Abiy claims
  - The Tigray war was not law enforcement, but power struggle
  - Abiy Ahmed promised several times that the Amhara and Eritrean troops would leave Western Tigray but this has not happened
  - The Eritrean army blocked the movement of humanitarian aid inside Tigray

## 7. Opinion pieces

- Rashid Abdi: [No doubt about the military alliance between three countries – Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia](#)
- John Young: [Tigray democracy for a post-war democratic Tigray](#)
- Gebrehiwot Hadush: [For lasting peace, TPLF's monopolization of power in Tigray must end](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Dirk Van Merode, Stijn Coenen: [De zon gaat onder in Ethiopië](#) [in Dutch]
- Jan Nyssen: [Testimony at the Tigray demonstration in Brussels on 17 February 2022](#) (video)
- Mehari Taddele Maru: [There Is a Path to Peace in Tigray](#) (Foreign Policy)



## **Digest 39. Detailed report on ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray (9 April 2022)**

Despite the co-evolving dramatic war in Ukraine, we hope that you have seen the information in the media on ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray (section 1) and the Tigray war death rate estimates (section 2). We further address the upcoming cropping season (section 3), as well as the blockade of Tigray, which, despite promises, continues unabated (section 4). Starving Tigrayan people cross now into Amhara region where they end up in prison camps (section 5). This digest further includes the announcement of a webinar on nature-based solutions, conflict and resilience in Tigray (section 6), links to scientific publications regarding the Tigray war (section 7), other media publications (section 8) and opinion pieces (section 9). Note also that these digests must be seen as collective work as each of them goes through of thorough peer review by half a dozen colleagues; a big “thank you” also for contributions of text, contacts to media, forwarding of first-hand information and overall moral support to the people in Tigray.

### **1. Detailed report on ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray**

A shocking report has been released by [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) on 6 April 2022. Amhara regional security forces and civilian authorities in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone have committed widespread abuses against Tigrayans since November 2020 that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said in the report. Ethiopian authorities have severely restricted access and independent scrutiny of the region, keeping the campaign of ethnic cleansing largely hidden. The report, **“‘We Will Erase You From This Land’: Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone,”** documents how newly-appointed officials in Western Tigray and security forces from the neighbouring Amhara region, with the acquiescence and possible participation of Ethiopian federal forces, systematically expelled several hundred thousand Tigrayan civilians from their homes using threats, unlawful killings, sexual violence, mass arbitrary detention, pillage, forcible transfer, and the denial of humanitarian assistance. These widespread and systematic attacks against the Tigrayan civilian population amount to crimes against humanity as well as war crimes.

These findings are in line with earlier testimonies of witnesses, including some that we had narrated for [Bete Mulu](#), along [Tekeze River](#), and in [Western Tigray in general](#).

There is also overwhelming evidence of destroyed settlements from satellite imagery: <https://twitter.com/Quen10Tarantino/status/1511761782028701697>

Remarkably, a couple of days before the release of the AI-HRW report, the University of Gondar started [excavations of mass graves in the very Western Tigray](#), claiming that they found evidence that these graves were holding remnants of ethnic Amharas executed forty years ago. We read the narrative, but we do not see evidence that forensic methods are used, and even less that there is involvement of specialised international organisations.

The Tigray government claims that essentially these excavations are destroying mass graves, related to the ethnic cleansing of Western Tigray. Other possible reasons for the coincidence of these

excavations, according to insiders in the AI-HRW investigation, could be an attempt to shift the narrative towards war crimes committed by Tigrayans, or an attempt to strengthen Amhara claims on Western Tigray in view of peace or ceasefire negotiations.

On 7 April, EU Commissioners Josep Borrell and Janez Lenarcic called for the UN “Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia” (which has been constituted and which is starting its work from Entebbe) to be allowed to go to Western Tigray as soon as possible.

It is also very worrying that, according to the mentioned HRW-AI report, thousands of Tigrayans are currently being held in Western Tigray and that they are in great danger of starvation or illegal execution.

And then, yes there are also reports of Tigrayan soldiers committing [war crimes](#) in Amhara region by the [end of 2021](#). But what happened and happens in Western Tigray is clearly in another order of magnitude.

Last but not least, we must appreciate Ukrainian Amnesty activists actively sharing the Western Tigray report: [https://twitter.com/Val\\_Voshchevska/status/1511707838564941828](https://twitter.com/Val_Voshchevska/status/1511707838564941828)

#### Further reading

- The Globe and Mail, 6 April 2022 : [Ethnic cleansing campaign in Western Tigray documented in new probe](#)
- Le Monde, 6 April 2022: [Ethiopie : Amnesty International et Human Rights Watch dénoncent des crimes contre l’humanité au Tigré occidental](#) [in French]
- NOS radio 1, 6 April 2022 : [Mensenrechtenorganisaties: misdrijven tegen de menselijkheid in Tigray](#) [in Dutch]
- Deutsche Welle, 6 April 2022: [Ethiopia: Tigray civilians targeted in ‘crimes against humanity,’ says report](#)
- The Guardian, 6 April 2022: [Tigray has been the scene of ‘ethnic cleansing’, say human rights groups](#)
- The New York Times, 17 March 2022: [‘Finish Them Off’: Aid Workers, Found on Battlefield, Executed by Soldiers](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 24 March 2022: [Ethiopia: Airstrike on Camp for Displaced Likely War Crime](#)
- Swissinfo, 30 March 2022: [Ethiopia pushes to block U.N. funding for abuse inquiry](#)
- Reuters, 31 March 2022: [Ethiopia fails at U.N. to block funding for independent abuse inquiry](#)
- Unicef, 11 March 2022, photo essay: [Displaced Tigrayan children are taught to draw to tell the story of conflict and hope](#)
- On 7 March 2022, there was an event in London to commemorate the plight of Tigrayan and other women for International Women’s Day, with Lord (David) Alton, Helen Hayes, Labour Spokesman Lord (Ray) Collins, Ethiopian journalist Lucy Kassa, and former Ethiopian Minister of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs, Filsan Abdullahi. [Read more](#).
- AlJazeera, 7 April 2022: [Are war crimes allegations in Ethiopia being ignored?](#)
- Reuters, 8 April 2022: [U.S. expresses alarm over reports of atrocities in Tigray](#)
- European Union External Action, 9 April 2022: [Ethiopia/Tigray: Spokesperson statement on the reports on human rights violations and abuses of civilians](#)

## 2. Starvation

After publishing the [previous digest on 13 March](#), holding an estimate of the number of civilian deaths, I have been contacted by [The Globe and Mail](#) and several other international media; the number of half a million deaths was widely published (we have always stated that it was the upper estimate).

Geoffrey York, the G&M journalist, sent out a tweet with the estimate of war-related deaths that quickly went viral: <https://twitter.com/geoffreyork/status/1503735436556087296>

Filsan Ahmed, the former Ethiopian cabinet minister who stepped down because of the atrocities committed against the Tigrayan people and in particular girls and women, also tweeted about the estimate, adding her own comments: [https://twitter.com/1\\_filsan/status/1504017931470004231](https://twitter.com/1_filsan/status/1504017931470004231). Even Russia's [Sputnik took it up](#) and twisted it in an interesting way, illustrating again how Putin's media machine is completely supportive of Abiy and his wars.

And our team received encouraging emails, such as this one: "You've done a tremendous job with the Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation, and with calculating a death toll from massacres and famine. This is in my opinion an essential duty for the UN, criminal investigators, states and humanitarian institutions, with employees that are paid to do it. In their absence, you've spent an enormous amount of energy in documenting one of the greatest crimes of the 21st Century. Thank you."

The Health Professionals Network for Tigray organised a hearing where I could present [the way we calculated the estimate](#). Among the participants there were dozens of (mainly US-based) staffers of think-tanks, NGOs, national and international organisations.

Testimonies on starvation in Tigray continue pouring in: "This day, a desperate call from F., the oldest partner of "Tesfay NGO". Even in Mekelle, people are starving. So far, he has done everything he can to beg for some flour for the poor, for the old. Now he can't do anything... "

"There was a call from G. who went to Alamata, on the southern border, where there is network (see section 4). They mentioned that people are starving in Sasun, a district between Adigrat and Mekelle, where we have relatives." Sasun is the [flat land on the southern outskirts of Adigrat](#), north of Goda glass factory. The area is known for its fertile and productive soil, with barley as the dominant crop. Learning about starvation in that area makes us worry more about people in areas with degraded, less productive soils.

Thousands of emaciated Tigrayans also pass the regional border of Amhara region, in search for food aid (see section 5).

### Further reading

- Globe and Mail, 15 March 2022: [Tigray war has seen up to half a million dead from violence and starvation, say researchers](#)
- Irish Times, 14 March 2022: [Lack of 'humanitarian effort' making Ethiopia's war worse, say aid groups](#)

- Discussion on the Tigray starvation launched by the Gravel Institute: <https://mobile.twitter.com/GravelInstitute/status/1504218022243938305>
- BBC, 22 March. Tigray starvation report in [Tigrinya](#), [Amharic](#), and [Afaan Oromoo](#) languages.
- OCHA, 31 March 2022: [Northern Ethiopia – Humanitarian Update](#)
- CTV News (Canada), 4 April 2022: [‘I don’t know if they’re alive or dead’: Humanitarian crisis in Tigray felt in Ottawa](#)
- BBC, 3 April 2022: [Ethiopia’s Tigray war: Inside Mekelle cut off from the world](#)
- WBUR, 29 March 2022: [No food, medicine or electricity: The truth about life in Ethiopia’s Tigray region](#)
- Lord (David) Alton, 4 April 2022: Starvation and rape used as weapons of war in #Tigray – Oral question in the UK Parliament ([https://twitter.com/DavidAltonHL/status/1511272716816560135?s=20&t=hDrQx-XeEWSQpJmUovF\\_jA](https://twitter.com/DavidAltonHL/status/1511272716816560135?s=20&t=hDrQx-XeEWSQpJmUovF_jA))
- Catholic News Service, 7 April 2022: [Bishop in Tigray sens out an SOS for his people](#)

### 3. The upcoming cropping season

So far, according to email messages from project staff, the spring rains have been poor, certainly in the Southern, South-Eastern and Central zones of Tigray; the spring rains have been insufficient for sowing the high-yielding sorghum because the growing period will be too short.

Farmers are ploughing their land in preparation of the summer rains and the Tigray government advises them to do so; no land should be left fallow this year. Most farmers have saved seeds; it is also against their culture to eat seed.

Grain marketing is likewise regulated: grain cannot be traded or moved between districts, but it is allowed to be transferred within districts and to the district town.

There is also some seed on the market, but owing to a shortage of funds, farmers may not be able to purchase it in time.

As a result, the seed situation is critical, although the crop genetic variability would be conserved, thanks to careful keeping of seeds.

A senior professor of agronomy at Mekelle University has also sent us an update on the fertilizer situation in Tigray. He has highlighted the issues of the forthcoming planting season to international NGOs working in Tigray, as well as UN agencies present, in several meetings organized by the Tigray Bureau of Agriculture. He insisted on inorganic fertilizer being delivered. Crop yield will be low if this is not handled now. On behalf of Tigray’s farmers, he urged that, in addition to humanitarian relief, fertilizer, insecticides, and improved seeds be provided. There would be constant hunger if this were not the case. All of the organizations agreed to notify their headquarters.

An additional challenge is that international organisations would fear for the [potential use of nitrogen-based fertilizer to prepare explosives](#). However, weapons continue to be shipped to Ethiopia, so the risk seems small that fertilizer be used for preparation of bombs. In Raya, both on the Tigray and the

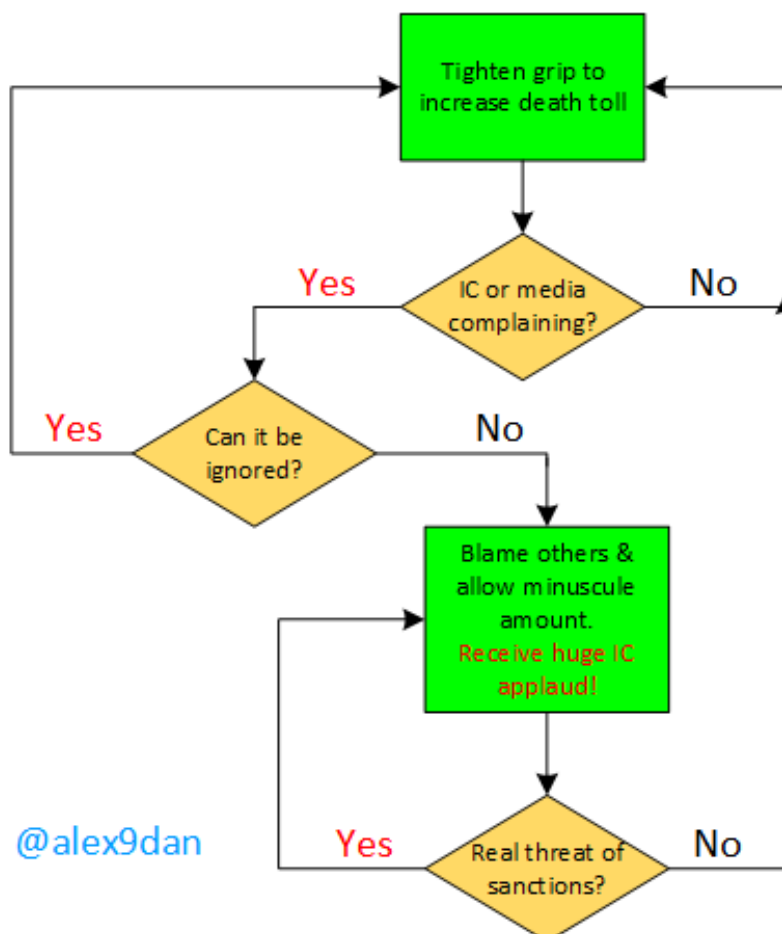
Amhara side, there is shortage of fertilizer (confirming the country-wide low supply). This will not be a problem for the areas with spate irrigation which are naturally fertilised with sediment, but rainfed crop production (which is the large majority of Tigray's croplands) and that on formally irrigated lands will be less.

#### 4. Tigray blockade: coping with absence of telecommunication and banking

Some colleagues managed to send money to their family in Tigray, through the Afar route. It now has also become serious business in Alamata on the border to Amhara region. There is a detailed [Facebook post \(with automated English translation\)](#) about people travelling from all over Tigray to Alamata, in order to telephone to relatives abroad, asking to send money through smugglers. Whereas some months ago, there was a 20% commission, in Alamata the rate has now increased to 50%! Of course, not only such type of smuggling incurs costs, but the demand is also high.

And the blockade of Tigray continues. After a much-hyped small convoy of 20 lorries with food aid and one tanker lorry with fuel for humanitarian operations, the second UN convoy since the announcement of the "humanitarian truce" has been stopped. The rationale and tactics of siege implementation by the Ethiopian government, has been conceptually represented as a decision tree by @alex9dan on Twitter:

### ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TREE How to make Tigray siege a success



### Further reading

- BBC, 18 March 2022: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: What's stopping aid getting in?](#)
- The Guardian, 1 April 2022: [First food aid for 100 days enters Tigray under 'humanitarian truce'](#)
- The Telegraph, 30 March 2022: [Tigray remains without aid despite humanitarian truce](#)
- VOA, 24 March 2022: [Ethiopia Declares 'Indefinite Humanitarian Truce'](#)
- Meron Gebreananaye & Saba Mah'derom, 30 March 2022: [Ethiopia's "humanitarian truce" and its cycle of empty promises](#) (African Arguments)
- The Guardian, 1 April 2022: [The Guardian view on Ethiopia's war: a glimpse of hope](#)
- The Economist, 2 April 2022: [A fragile ceasefire offers hope in Ethiopia – but it may collapse unless Tigray receives humanitarian aid](#)
- Reuters, 23 March 2022: [U.S. focused on delivery of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Focus on Africa, 25 March 2022: [Etiopia, tregua umanitaria dopo 17 mesi dall'inizio della guerra in Tigray](#) [in Italian]
- The Telegraph, 16 March 2022: [Tigray facing world's biggest health 'catastrophe', WHO warns](#)
- BBC Tigrinya, 17 March 2022: [ቅልውላው ትግራይ፡ ዕጽዋ ትግራይ ከሳብ መዓስ?](#) [Tigray crisis: Tigray blockade until when?]
- USIP, 31 March 2022: [Ethiopia's Truce Offers Hope, But the Next Steps Are Complex](#)
- Addis Standard, 7 April 2022: [UN Secretary-General welcomes news of food aid reaching Tigray](#) (this statement comes two weeks after a mere twenty trucks entered to Tigray!)

### 5. Tigrayans in search for food aid end up in prison camps

Thousands of Tigrayans mainly from the border districts, but also farther away have started walking in search for food and ended up in Kobo or Sokota, in Amhara region. On arrival in Kobo, the hunger refugees are in a bad shape like never seen in Tigray in recent decennia ([see our presentation](#), slide 18). It is not “Korem 1984”, but close to that state of desperation... Our contacts in Kobo mention that, while the local people try to accommodate these hunger refugees the best they can, the *Fano* paramilitary group actively search them, as they consider any Tigrayan as a potential spy for the TDF (Tigray Defence Forces). The Ethiopian authorities transport these people further south; destinations named are Shewa Robit, Semera and even Adama but the precise whereabouts of these Tigrayan hunger refugees are unknown to their relatives and friends.

Staff of international organizations informed us that they could visit some of the “Tigray IDP camps” – in fact prison camps, managed by the ENDF (Ethiopian army). Conditions there are very cramped and services minimal. People are forcibly taken to such camps from the Tigray border, their mobile phones are taken from them, and people are not allowed to leave the camps (even if they have relatives in Addis Ababa with whom they could stay).

In some of these prison camps, there are citizens of Tigrayan origin with an international passport, who discreetly wanted to travel to Addis Ababa in order to fly home. Embassies trying to assist confirmed that their citizens are extremely badly treated in these camps – no mobile phones, not allowed to leave, only one meal a day, no access to medical facilities.

Local authorities in Afar and Amhara regions say that all of these measures are taken for “for the security of those displaced”, but every indication is that they are in fact prison camps. The small

positive note is that the ICRC (International Red Cross) also has access to monitor a bit and give assistance where possible.

## 6. Webinar announcement. Tigray: nature-based solutions, conflict and resilience

How has the war in Tigray impacted its landscape-level environmental restoration programme?

On 26 April, join the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) as they launch a new remote sensing study with Teklehaymanot Weldemichel (NTNU, Norway), Henrike Schulte to Bühne (CEOBS), and Jan Nyssen (UGent, Belgium). Moderation by Doug Weir (CEOBS).

Register: [www.bit.ly/TigrayNBS](http://www.bit.ly/TigrayNBS)

## 7. Scientific publications

- Goto, R. et al., 2022. [War is a public health emergency](#). The Lancet, Volume 399, Issue 10332, 1302
- Yibeltal Assefa and Theodros Getachew, 2022. [Successes and challenges to ensure health and wellbeing in Ethiopia](#). The Lancet, Volume 399, Issue 10332, 1283 – 1284.
- Gesesew H, Berhane K, Siraj ES, et al., 2022. [The impact of war on the health system of the Tigray region in Ethiopia: a response to complaints](#). BMJ Global Health 2022;7:e008839.
- Biadgilgn Demissie, Nyssen, J., Annys, S., Emnet Negash, Tesfakiros Gebrehiwet, Fetien Abay, Wolff, E., 2022. [Geospatial solutions for evaluating the impact of the Tigray conflict on farming](#). Acta Geophysica; in press.

## 8. Other media articles

- SwissInfo, 18 March 2022: [Ethiopia arrests former government officials from Tigray, rights body says](#)
- Reuters, 30 March 2022: [Ethiopia releases former Tigray government officials – lawyer](#)
- Bloomberg, 28 March 2022: [Ethiopia Troops Seen Moving Toward Tigray After Truce Agreed](#)
- Novi Glas, 7 March 2022: [Vojna v Tigraju](#) (War in Tigray) [in Slovenian]
- Tghat, 15 March 2022: [Ethiopian and Allied Forces Looted 3000 Vellum Books and 300 Crosses from Waldebbba Monastery of Tigray](#)
- RFI, 6 April 2022: [Que signifie la «relégation» diplomatique entre l’Ethiopie et l’Erythrée ?](#) [in French] (What does the diplomatic “relegation” between Ethiopia and Eritrea mean?)
- BBC Amharic, 8 April 2022: [በደቡብ ክልል ታስረው የሚገኙ የትግራይ ተወላጆች የተጠረጠርንበት ወንጀል ሳይነገረን 9 ወራት አለፈን አሉ](#) [in Amharic] (there are 1300 Tigrayans detained without charges for 9+ months in a campus of Wachemo University in southern Ethiopia. Some of them are “returnees” from Saudi Arabia, others were rounded up from buses and streets.)
- US senate committee on foreign relations, 29 March 2022: [SFRCA Approves Ethiopia Peace and Stabilization Act with Overwhelming Bipartisan Support](#)
- AlJazeera, 28 March 2022: [Analysis: Can Ethiopia’s ‘truce’ end its devastating civil war?](#)

## 9. Opinion pieces



- Carine Kaneza Nantulya and Louis Charbonneau : [International Organizations are Failing Ethiopia](#)
- Vincent Hugeux, Tyrans d'Afrique. Les mystères du despotisme postcolonial. Chapitre 7: [Issayas Afeworki: les mythes de l'ermite](#) [in French]. Perrin, 2021.
- Teklay Gebremichael : [Fighting not the Reason Aid not Getting to Tigray](#)
- Alex De Waal: [Kenyan diplomat's criticism of Russia highlights a double standard in Africa](#) (Responsible Statecraft)
- Bobby Ghosh: [The World's Deadliest War Isn't in Ukraine, But in Ethiopia](#) (Bloomberg)
- Girmay M.: [The record shows there is genocide in Tigray](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Hagos Abrha Abay: [Ethiopia's war in Tigray risks wiping out centuries of the world's history](#) (The Conversation)
- Meaza Gidey: [Women are essential to preventing conflicts and sustaining peace](#) (Defy Hate Now)
- Buli Edjeta: [Ethiopia's stillborn National Dialogue](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Tony Magaña: [USA naively delays calling Tigray Genocide while Britain moves forward](#)
- Agenzia Fides, 11 March 2022: [The Bishops: "If we do not eliminate the war, it will eliminate the Ethiopians](#)
- Colleague Kjetil Tronvoll, as a political anthropologist, expressed in a concise way what I was having in mind for some time: "Autocratic governments behave in similar and predictable patterns. A mindset of an autocratic leader is tuned into rationalizing the use of violence and suppression, using a rhetoric of deception and lies". Kjetil published an infographic how Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and Putin of Russia read from the same playbook: <https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1511641828105330690>.



## Digest 40.            **Famine conditions related to the bad 2021 harvest (23 May 2022)**

We must examine the devastating starvation in Tigray once again in this digest (section 1). We also point out that Tigray's blockade may result in renewed warfare; hence the mobilization of the Tigray army (section 2). A number of scientific publications about the Tigray conflict have been written by academics (section 3). The recording of Howard University's full-day symposium on "Crisis in Tigray: A Critical Dialogue" was made available by this "historically black" university in the United States (section 4). Unfortunately, we must also pay attention to human rights violations at Ethiopian universities; unpleasant news has come from the Universities of Gondar and Bahir Dar (section 5). We also discuss large Canadian mining interests and a fresh public relations operation (with academics involved) to whitewash the Ethiopian and Eritrean regimes (section 6). The concluding portions of this digest, as usual, are devoted to an overview of media articles (section 7) and opinion pieces (section 8).

### **1. Famine in Tigray**

These messages came from one of our friends in Hagere Selam, Tigray:

On 10 May: *"I went to my village last week and was not happy because my relatives told me that most of our neighbours have finished their grain and are left with no food, no more animal to sell. The same is true in the other villages, such as Hich'i, Tsigaba , Halah, etc. I am very afraid for the coming few months unless some change is made."*

On 20 May: *"Let me share you the current crises here following the siege. At the time of harvesting many people have been migrating to villages from the towns and now after finishing the grain of the farmers, the farmers together with their relatives who came from town are migrating back to the towns. The price of grain has increased to more than 8000 birr for 100 kg (quintal or qt). Before a few months our project bought a quintal of cereals by 2800 birr. At that time the price was also 4300 birr for 1 quintal of flour but now more than 12000 birr for one qt of flour."*

Part of the people do not just migrate to the towns, but took even the risk to [move to the neighbouring Amhara region](#).

These famine conditions of course are related to the harvest of the end of 2021, which was the worst in decades, because sowing could only start lately. The lean season has started already. Next harvest is only expected for November-December 2022!!!

[UNOCHA formulates](#) the situation as follows (status on 20 May):

*"Though humanitarian response operations in northern Ethiopia have been scaled up in the past months, the overall operating environment remains constrained mainly by the lack of essential services and functioning markets, as well as the inability to bring sufficient supplies, fuel, and cash to Tigray,*

*limited access to people in hard-to-reach areas across Afar, Amhara and Tigray, and limited presence of partners on the ground in some areas. Also, the current response is not meeting the increasing needs of people in need as the resources available are not matching the requirements.*

*Around 15,500 MT of food has been brought into Tigray by the main food partners through the nine humanitarian convoys between 01 April and 16 May. The food has been dispatched to more than 45 prioritized woredas and distribution in the woredas is ongoing. At least 68,000 MT of additional food commodities are still required to move into Tigray to complete Round 3 distribution.*

*Between 5 and 11 May, slightly over 78,000 people were assisted with food in major towns. Cumulatively, partners have assisted less than 1.6 million people with food in Tigray as of 11 May and under round 3 launched in mid-October 2021. This is **only 25 per cent of the total planned caseload.**"*

Earlier on, we have reported regularly about Hagere Selam and Dogu'a Tembien as an example of how life is nowadays in Tigray. With the communication blockade, our contacts are few and far in between.

On 8 May, Professor Kindeya filmed the Hagere Selam main street while driving through the town. <https://mobile.twitter.com/ProfKindeya/status/1523911836910989312>. Shadows look like 9 AM-ish. At this time in the morning, in normal periods, the town is alive and kicking with all shops opened, many people and vehicles on the streets. Here we have a feeling of a ghost town, though traces of the Hagere Selam massacre (4 and 5 December 2020) have been cleaned away. Only a couple of shops are open; it would have been interesting to see which goods are still available. Much of the war damage at street level has been boarded up; in taller buildings, broken windows and walls are visible. Water is brought in by donkeys and a horse cart; by the end of the video, in the lower outskirts of the town on the right hand side of the road, groups of people can be seen near hand pumps. In the landscape views at the end of the video, we observe freshly ploughed lands, but also lands that have not been cultivated (yellowish colour due to stubble remnants from last year).

Kindeya also posted pictures of farmers threshing teff harvested from irrigated lands near Wukro (<https://twitter.com/ProfKindeya/status/1524959694997135384>). In line with the findings of our study last year, [irrigation farmers in Tigray continue planting cereals](#) in places where commercial crops were grown pre-war. Feeding the family remains the first objective. It is also witnessed that there is a serious transportation problem for marketing agricultural products, as well as lack of critical inputs like seed, fertiliser and pesticides, for the upcoming planting season. Rains have started, land preparation is underway, but without these inputs, low yields are again expected for the next harvest.

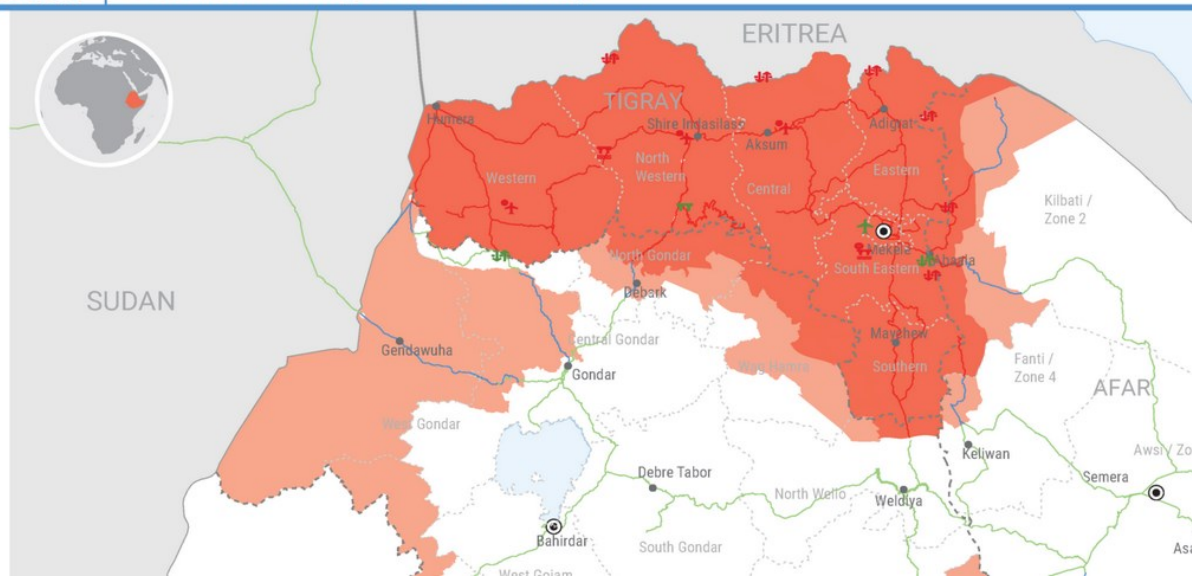
#### Further reading:

- Markos Sisay: [Ethiopian government's Tigray siege leading to starvation, suicide, exodus](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Reliefweb, 20 May 2022: [East Africa Seasonal Monitor](#)
- Global Citizen, 13 April 2022: [9 Shocking Facts on the Scale of Need in Tigray](#)
- UMD Media, 25 April 2022: [Conversation with David Del Conte, former OCHA's Deputy Director for Ethiopia](#), on Siege Warfare and Starvation of Civilians in Tigray

- Michael Henry and Will Slotznick : [Photo Essay - Beauty Before Atrocity: A Memory of Tigray](#) (Yale Journal)
- Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 21 May 2022: [Tausende sterben, und niemand schaut hin. Äthiopien ist ein zerbrochenes Land](#) [in German]
- The New Humanitarian, 26 April 2022: [Tigray's health system 'totally collapsed', say health workers](#)
- Associated Press, 20 April 2022: [Tigray war claims the lives of at least 1,900 children through malnutrition](#)
- The East African, 21 May 2022: [Ethiopia tops global list of highest IDPs](#)
- [Tghat, 11 May 2022: Tigray's Bureau of Education: Summary Report on Tigray Education's Human and Material Damage](#)
- Voice of America, 18 May 2022: [Tigray War Costing 1 Million Children a Third Year of School, UN Says](#)
- Fetien Abay and Biadgilgn Demissie: [Tigray's Wounded Agriculture and a Second Year of Famine: An Urgent Call for Action](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Research Professional News, 28 April 2022: [Ethiopian researchers share how the war in Tigray has upended their lives and careers](#)
- CBC, 20 April 2022: [Food crisis in Ethiopia is growing as world's attention turns to Ukraine: Sask.-born aid worker](#)
- Addis Standard, 30 April 2022: [US calls for urgent restoration of essential services in Tigray, encouraged by 'series' of actions to end conflict](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 26 April 2022: [Tigray's health system 'totally collapsed', say health workers](#)
- Black Star News, 21 April 2022: [Ethiopia: If Abiy Ahmed Can't Ensure Relief Deliveries Then U.N. Forces Must Step In](#)
- Global Health Now, 12 April 2022: [Tigray \(and Its Health Care System\) Under Siege](#); also 10 April: [Attacks on Health Care: Responding to the Brutal Reality](#)
- RFI, 12 April 2022: [Éthiopie: l'étau se resserre autour des Tigréens](#) [in French]
- News24, 19 April 2022: [Only 4% of required aid has reached Tigray during mini-truce, says WHO chief](#)
- Berhanu Gebremedhin: [Starving Tigray by Destroying the agricultural Extension System](#) (Globe News Net)

## 2. Risks of renewed warfare

The blockade of Tigray continues to disrupt the movement of people, trade, electric power, telecommunication, banking, regional government budget, salaries, etc. The most fertile lands, in Western Tigray, have been occupied and around half a million of people removed from their lands have become IDPs within Tigray or refugees in Sudan.



*In red, the “hard to reach” areas, according to [UNOCHA](#) (status on 31 March 2022)*

The general feeling in Tigray is that the siege of the region absolutely must be lifted. Media increasingly report on talks between regional and federal authorities, but also about risks of renewed warfare. Tigray has set up its own army, with a general mobilisation. Concerns on forced recruitment have been raised, which comes in addition to the overall plights of famine, massacres, lack of healthcare, and a quarter up to half million civilian deaths in Tigray. There is, however, also phony worry about this mobilisation, particularly from regime allies and Canadian lobbyists (see section 6). People who cheered the Tigray conflict and seemed unconcerned about the hunger and killings in Tigray are suddenly showing genuine concern for families whose daughter or son is being conscripted? [Reuters](#) reported on such forced recruitments in Tigray and included a reply by Prof. Kindeya on behalf of the Tigray external relations office: “some low ranking government officials had detained family members to force their relatives to enlist but such incidents are rare; the relatives have been released and the officials punished”. Some Tigrayans, who enlisted in droves early in the war, are however growing increasingly hesitant to fight, according to Reuters.

### Further reading:

- News24, 21 May 2022: [Olusegun Obasanjo secures release of more than 4 000 prisoners of war in Tigray](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 20 May 2022: [Concerns grow Ethiopia's fragile truce may break](#)
- The Independent, 22 April 2022: [Ethiopia's fragile truce over Tigray conflict threatened by lack of promised aid](#)
- The Economist, 19 May 2022: [Could Ethiopia's war in Tigray spark conflict with Sudan?](#)
- Ahmed Hassen and Simon Rynn: [Ethiopia: An All-Out War Looks Imminent](#) (RUSI, 6 May 2022)
- Tghat, 20 April 2022: [President of Tigray, Debretsion Gebremichael, Writes Open Letter to UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres](#)

- Tghat, 21 May 2022: [Tigray Releases More Than 4000 Captured Ethiopian Soldiers](#)
- The Africa Report, 20 May 2022: [Ethiopia: Tigray rebels vow to release 4,200 POWs in effort to boost peace talks](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 10 May 2022: [In Afar, TPLF applies scorched earth policy while keeping foot in the door](#)
- New African Magazine, 3 May 2022: [Lethal drones are a new menace to Africa](#)
- Second Line of Defense, 5 May 2022: [Turkey as Major Player in Armed Drones](#)
- RFI, 7 May 2022: [Violences sexuelles, exécutions... Des Éthiopiens témoignent de l'occupation tigréenne](#) (in French)
- Le Monde, 30 April 2022: [Demeke Zewdu, the warlord who wants to avenge the Amhara in Ethiopia](#)
- African Affairs, 12 March 2022: [Tigray: Why are soldiers attacking religious heritage sites?](#)
- YouTube, 29 April 2022: [Congressman Brad] [Sherman Raises Tigray Crisis to Secretary of State Blinken](#)
- Ted Galt, 2 May 2022: The atrocious video footage of Ethiopia's soldiers torturing and executing a young Tigrayan man has been geolocated. Twitter thread: <https://twitter.com/Quen10Tarantino/status/1520949108571181058>
- Lyla Mehta: [Peace urgently needed for Ethiopia](#) (Institute of Development Studies)
- Crisis Group: [Building on Ethiopia's Fragile Truce](#)

### 3. Scientific publications

- Biadgilgn Demissie, Nyssen, J., Annys, S., Emnet Negash, Tesfakiros Gebrehiwet, Fetien Abay, and Wolff, E., 2022. [Geospatial solutions for evaluating the impact of the Tigray conflict on farming](#). *Acta Geophysica* (2022): 1-15.
- Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) webinar: [Tigray: Nature-based solutions, conflict and resilience](#)
- Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS): [Report: The war in Tigray is undermining its environmental recovery](#)
- French National Museum of Archaeology, new website: [Le royaume d'Axoum](#) (the Kingdom of Aksum – only in French). Scientific direction: Jean-François Breton, [directeur](#) de recherche CNRS
- Hagos Abrha, 2022. [Tigray's ancient rock-hewn churches are under threat: why it matters](#). The Conversation.
- Hailay Gesesew, Kiros Berhane, Elias Siraj, Dawd Siraj, Mulugeta Gebregziabher, Azeb Gebreselassie, Amir Siraj, Maru AregawiSelome Gezahegn, Fisaha Tesfay, 2022. [The impact of war on the health system of the Tigray region in Ethiopia: a response to complaints](#). *BMJ Global Health*. 7. e008839.
- Kaplan J., 2022. [Targeting healthcare in war: a tragically tried and tested strategy that humanity must disown—an essay by Jonathan Kaplan](#). *British Medical Journal*, 377:o884
- Kibrom Abay, Guush Berhane, Chamberlin, J., 2022. [What people from war-torn Tigray told us about the state of their lives amid the war](#). The Conversation.
- Matfess, H., 2022: [Alms, Arms, And The Aftermath: The Legacies Of Rebel Provision Of Humanitarian Aid In Ethiopia](#), African Affairs

- Mulugeta Gebregziabher, Pamela DeLargy, Aisha Jumaan, Mukesh Kapila, Leonard Rubenstein, 2022. [War prevention and mitigation are public health imperatives of our time](#). *eClinicalMedicine*, 47, 101385.
- Nyssen, J., 2022. Database: Western Tigray in 96 historical and ten ethno-linguistic maps (1607-2009) (1.1) [Data set]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6557918>
- Nyssen, J., Emnet Negash, Van Schaeybroeck, B., Haegeman, K., Annys, S., 2022. [Crop cultivation at wartime – plight and resilience of Tigray’s agrarian society \(north Ethiopia\)](#). *Defence and Peace Economics*.
- Plaut, M., 2022. [Famine in Ethiopia: the roots lie in Eritrea’s long-running feud with Tigrayans](#). *The Conversation*.
- Sato, M., 2022: [ティグライ戦争—現地で起きている「人道危機」について—](#) [The Tigray War: The "Humanitarian Crisis" happening on the ground] (in Japanese). *Journal of Global Humanities and Social Sciences*, Nagasaki University, 8: 159-182.
- Schulte to Bühne, H., Weir, D., Nyssen, J., Weldemichel, T.G., 2022. [Tigray in Ethiopia was an environmental success story – then the war undid decades of regreening](#). *The Conversation*, 27/4/2022.
- Tronvoll, K., 2022. [The Anatomy of Ethiopia’s Civil War](#). *Current History*, 121 (835): 163–169.
- Wall, L., 2022. [The Siege of Ayder Hospital: A Cri de Coeur from Tigray, Ethiopia](#). *Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery*

#### 4. Symposium at Howard University

On 12 November 2021, Howard University organised a full-day Virtual Symposium “Crisis in Tigray: A Critical Dialogue”, with about twenty speakers, all from academics. Howard University is a “[historically black university](#)” in the U.S.; one of their alumni is Kamala Harris, current Vice-President of the USA. See the symposium overview, including Organizing Committee, Participants’ Bios and Schedule, at <https://cfas.howard.edu/tigray>. Full recording of the symposium is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eivJjTWqmc>.

#### 5. Some examples of Ethiopian universities’ involvement in human rights abuses

BBC reported that experts from the University of Gondar (UoG) supervised a campaign of disposal of evidence of massacres in Western Tigray in April 2022. UoG denied, asked retraction of the article and sanctioning of the journalist. BBC maintained the article and published a summary of the UoG reaction.

- BBC, 7 May 2022: [Ethiopia war: Evidence of mass killing being burned - witnesses](#)
- BBC, 10 May 2022: [Ethiopia's Gondar University denies aiding grave destruction in west Tigray](#).

Sources close to Bahir Dar University management mention that the university was contacted by journalists investigating the [murder of Professor Meareg](#) (BDU). In the days before the murder, the BDU staff Facebook page had posted an article inciting to murder Prof. Meareg. The page remained online for many months; it was taken down only on 24 March 2022, after journalists contacted the



university management – fortunately their staff’s post concerning Prof. Meareg has been archived at <https://archive.ph/A3ac6>. Remarkably, BDU only has reacted when they were challenged by international media – the murder in itself was not a reason to take down the inflammatory post.

The [database of Ethiopian public universities involvement on human rights abuses](#) has been updated.

## 6. Canada mining and lobbying

Canadian professor Ann Fitz-Gerald recently published an article on the website of the MLI lobby group: [Tigrayans speak on the realities of life under an insurgency regime](#). She depicts life in Tigray based on interviews with Tigrayan prisoners of war, and refugees who fled famine in Tigray (see section 1).

A first read indicated that she reports the discourse of POWs and IDPs who try to “talk themselves out of it”, saying what the Ethiopian authorities wants to hear. In the whole article not one of the witnesses had a discourse about massacres, killing of oxen, looting of their village, no aid entering, etc. When people move out of Tigray (for sake of famine, livelihood, family reasons, to avoid conscription...) they are put in prison camps by Amhara militias and government soldiers; to survive they are compelled to hold a discourse blaming the Tigray government. They cannot say “drones were bombing Mekelle”, rather they will say “TPLF shoots at the drones and we get the shrapnel”!

Patrick Wight launched a discussion about the ethics of the reported research on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/PatrickWight1/status/1519718699732713474>), as well as Prof. Mulugeta Gebregziabher ( <https://twitter.com/ProfMulugeta/status/1519861116758855680> ).

The Economist’s journalist Tom Gardner also raised issues related to the ethics of Fitz-Gerald’s report. After which a Canadian novelist, Jeff Pearce, started a [bullying campaign that led to Tom Gardner being expelled from Ethiopia](#).

One of the reasons for the Canadian government avoiding to officially address the atrocities in the Tigray war might be related to the country’s mining interests in Tigray. The active and applied mineral exploration and mining licenses for Tigray’s gold and base metal resources [have been mapped](#). The largest exploration license areas are concessions of Canadian companies, followed by the U.S. and the United Kingdom.

Recently, The Ethiopia Cable (<https://twitter.com/RAbdiAnalyst/status/1522461584064499713/photo/1>) exposed links between big Canadian mining interests and the renewed PR campaign (involving among others lobbyist Ann Fitz-Gerald) to whitewash the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments.

**Further reading:**

- The Globe and Mail: [Canadian miners pursue prospects in war-torn Tigray](#)
- Breach Media: [Leaked report accuses Canada of covering for mining companies in war-torn Ethiopia](#)
- All Africa: [Canadian Miner Keen on Gold Deposits in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Tony Magaña: [Canadian fake policy and silence on Tigray to preserve mining claims alleged](#)
- The Economist: [On May 13th Ethiopia's government withdrew the press accreditation of Tom Gardner, The Economist's correspondent in Addis Ababa](#)
- Open Canada, 13 April: [Trade Trumps Human Rights for Trudeau in Ethiopia's Civil War](#)
- The Continent (South Africa), 14 May 2022: [The propaganda wars: How Ethiopia restricts foreign press](#) (pages 24 and 25)

## 7. Other media articles

- Nation Africa, 19 May 2022: [Red flag raised over possible 'genocide' in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Telemadrid, 18 May 2022: [Alcorcón dedica una plaza a María Hernández, cooperante asesinada en Etiopía](#) - Alcorcón dedicates a square to María Hernández, a aid worker killed in Ethiopia (in Spanish)
- Voice of America, 17 May 2022: [Zimbabwe Willing to Extradite Mengistu](#)
- Bloomberg, 14 May 2022: [Ethiopian Region Claims 7,000 Civilians Killed by Tigray Forces](#)
- Express & Star, 14 May 2022: ['Don't forget about Tigray crisis' says Black Country campaigner](#)
- National Catholic Register, 11 May 2022: [Ethiopia Is Committing Genocide Against the Tigrayan People, Say Priests From Region](#)
- Democracy Now!, 3 May 2022: [Rights Groups Demand Release of Ethiopian Journalists Facing Death Penalty over War Coverage](#)
- The Economist, 3 May 2022: [Lucy Kassa on the dangers journalists face for uncovering truths in war](#)
- Voice of America, 27 April 2022: [Advocates Warn of Environmental Destruction in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- AFP, 24 April 2022: [Ethiopian peacekeepers from Tigray seek asylum in Sudan](#)
- Addis Standard, 23 April 2022: [National Security Council classifies Ethiopia's "enemies" into three, vows to respond with timely, proportional measures](#)
- Eater SF, 21 April 2022: [San Francisco Restaurant Owner Raises Money for War Refugees From Tigray](#)
- Anadolu Agency, 19 April 2022: [Ethiopian ex-soldiers desirous to join Russian fighting force in Ukraine - Thousands turn up at Russian Embassy in Addis Ababa to submit their credentials](#)
- Addis Standard, 18 April 2022: [Russian Embassy denies long queue of Ethiopians to join Russian army, says queue show of solidarity](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 18 April 2022: [Ethiopia launches a national dialogue, but divisions run deep](#)
- Human Rights Concern – Eritrea [describes the dangers faced by Eritrean refugees in Alem-Wach camp in Amhara Region, and in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps in Tigray](#) (15 April 2022)
- Tghat, 14 April 2022: [Destruction of tourism infrastructures in Hawzen district, Tigray](#)
- BBC, 13 April 2022: [Ukraine attention shows bias against black lives, WHO chief says](#)
- Devex, 13 April 2022: [European Commission: \\$300M World Bank grant to Ethiopia 'premature'](#)
- The Economist, 13 April 2022: [Ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans may prolong Ethiopia's civil war](#)



- Foreign Policy, 12 April 2022: [U.S. Envoy for East Africa to Call It Quits](#)

## 8. Opinion pieces

- Aman: [Ethiopia: A Land of Fabricated Mythos](#) (Omna Tigray)
- Asafa Jalata: [Abiy's regime is a modern version of the Ethiopian empire-state](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Daniel Berhane: [A Quarrel in a Faraway Country](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Alex de Waal: [Abiy Ahmed—PhD?](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Alex de Waal: [Strongmen, coups, corruption drive Horn of Africa to the brink](#) (Responsible Statecraft)
- Ethiopia Insight: [The Ethiopian civil war that destroyed Tigray's economy](#)
- James Jeffrey: [Ethiopia's sacred tablets must remain in Britain - With thousands dying in Tigray, why is Parliament discussing ancient relics?](#) (The Critic)
- René Lefort: [Abiy's botched centralization fuels Ethiopia's feuding centrifugal forces](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Trevor Lwere: [On Ethiopia, Ukraine and the problem of the color line](#) (NDSMC Observer)
- Meron Gebreananaye, Hailay Abrha Gesesew and Arkebe Taddele: [Ukraine and Tigray: A Hierarchy in the Value of Human Life](#) (The Elephant)
- Mitiku Haile: Direct Talk with Professor Mitiku Haile  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUNAtzGmirY&t=5s> (Tigray TV)
- Michael Rubin: [Why do Western leaders support Ukraine but ignore Tigray's genocide?](#) (Washington Examiner)
- Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel: [Tigray is Africa's Ukraine: We Must Build Pan-African Solidarity](#) (The Elephant)
- Tony Magaña: [Western Tigray mass grave exposed to wrongful DNA contamination](#)

## **Digest 41. Abba Melaku reports from Wukro: “Death is our bride” (21 June 2022)**

Despite showcasing of aid convoys, most of Tigray is still in famine-like conditions. On 16 June, [OCHA's situation report](#) noted that due to a lack of essential services and functioning markets, as well as an inability to bring in sufficient supplies, fuel, and cash to Tigray, limited access to people in hard-to-reach areas, and a lack of partner presence on the ground in some areas, the overall operating environment remains constrained. The Ethiopian government even prohibits the shipment of chlorine tablets to Tigray for the much-needed disinfection of drinking water.

The present response does not yet meet the rising demands of the most vulnerable persons since the resources available do not match the requirements. Despite the challenges, humanitarian partners continue to give assistance and gather additional funds. During the week before 16 June, food partners in Tigray helped almost 340,000 individuals with 5,303 MT of food.

In total, more than 20,000 MT of food was delivered to more than 1.2 million individuals in the region between early April and the 8th of June. It's worth noting that most of Tigray's 6 million inhabitants are estimated to be people in need!

The situation is relatively better in those parts of Amhara and Afar regions, that have also been affected by several months of warfare. As of the 13th of June, more than 10 million individuals in the Amhara region have received food aid. Similarly, as of June 13, approximately 1 million individuals in Afar have received more than 15,500 MT of food at full ration as part of the ongoing food distribution.

In this circular we will focus on the town of Wukro, thanks to the diary kept there by Abba Melaku (section 1). Next, there is the World Agriculture Prize 2021 that was awarded to Professor Mitiku, which we consider also as a token for Tigray's resilience (section 2). There is also news about peace talks between the Tigrayan and central Ethiopian governments (section 3). However, accountability remains important; Artificial Intelligence figurehead Dr. Timnit Gebru has slammed the 'both sides' discourse when it comes to war crimes in and around Tigray (section 4). We conclude with four newly published scientific papers about the Tigray war (section 5), “in the media” (section 6) and opinion pieces (section 7).

### **1. News from Wukro**

Father Angel (in Tigrinya: Abba Melaku) is an 84-years old Spanish priest who has lived in Wukro (Tigray) for some 30 years. Angel happened to be in Spain for medical care when the war erupted, and then did every effort to return to Wukro, in which he succeeded in January 2022. His blog is posted in Spanish and it reads like a diary. Even when titles of some pages sound generic (e.g. “Noticias internacionales”), the red thread are the destructions, the blockade and the daily life in Wukro.

The blog is summarised in this article: Trouw, 9 Juni 2022. [Missionaris Ángel Olan se boos dat de wereld niets doet aan de honger in Tigray. 'Mensenrechten tellen niet meer'](#) [in Dutch; but Google Translate is quite accurate]

The diary itself is in Spanish, you may again use Google Translate:

| Date      | Spanish (with weblinks)                                                                                                                                  | English                                                                                                                   |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11/1/2022 | <a href="#">Ángel Olan se siente apoyado con su llegada a Wukro</a>                                                                                      | Angel Olan feels supported with his arrival in Wukro                                                                      |
| 20/1/2022 | <a href="#">Compartimos las primeras imágenes del misionero Ángel Olan en Wukro</a>                                                                      | The first images of missionary Angel Olan in Wukro                                                                        |
| 17/2/2022 | <a href="#">Ángel Olan comparte sus tres primeras semanas en Wukro - La necesidad de alimentos es de prioridad absoluta - Nuestra novia de la muerte</a> | Angel Olan shares news of his first three weeks in Wukro - The need for food is an absolute priority – Death is our bride |
| 24/3/2022 | <a href="#">Ecos de la sociedad de Wukro</a>                                                                                                             | Echos of the Wukro society                                                                                                |
| 24/3/2021 | <a href="#">El sentimiento tigrino aflora con el conflicto bélico etíope</a>                                                                             | The Tigrayan feeling emerges with the Ethiopian war conflict                                                              |
| 24/3/2022 | <a href="#">Negar el Derecho a la Soberanía Alimentaria es un crimen contra la Humanidad - Mantenimiento del comedor de ancianos</a>                     | Denying the Right to Food Sovereignty is a Crime Against Humanity - Maintenance of the Soup Kitchen for the Elderly       |
| 24/3/2022 | <a href="#">Abuso de la Soberanía Nacional</a>                                                                                                           | Abuse of National Sovereignty                                                                                             |
| 18/4/2022 | <a href="#">Sin camiones humanitarios entraremos en la sobrevivencia de los más fuertes</a>                                                              | Without humanitarian trucks we go for the survival of the fittest                                                         |
| 20/4/2022 | <a href="#">Cada día sin llegar la ayuda aumenta este crimen humano en Tigray</a>                                                                        | Every day without help increases this human crime in Tigray                                                               |
| 22/4/2022 | <a href="#">La Operación «Ley y Orden» contra Tigray</a>                                                                                                 | Operation Law and Order against Tigray                                                                                    |
| 4/5/2022  | <a href="#">Mapa de solicitudes de ayuda - Ayuda que sí nos ha llegado - Comida de Pascua</a>                                                            | Map of help requests - Help that has come to us - Easter Meal                                                             |
| 4/5/2022  | <a href="#">¿A quién preocupa los niños que están muriendo en Tigray?</a>                                                                                | Who cares about the children who are dying in Tigray?                                                                     |
| 25/5/2022 | <a href="#">Planes para la reconstrucción de Wukro</a>                                                                                                   | Plans for the reconstruction of Wukro                                                                                     |
| 25/5/2022 | <a href="#">Noticias internacionales y de Wukro</a>                                                                                                      | International and Wukro News                                                                                              |
| 14/6/2022 | <a href="#">Podríamos decir que han echado a Tigray de Etiopía</a>                                                                                       | One could say that they have kicked Tigray out of Ethiopia                                                                |
| 14/6/2022 | <a href="#">Diferencias de trato de la ONU y desajustes mundiales</a>                                                                                    | UN differences in treatment and global mismatches                                                                         |

Further news about the humanitarian situation in Tigray:

- AP, 27/5/2022: [Biggest aid convoy since cease-fire nears Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Devex, 7 June 2022: [Mark Lowcock: Ethiopian government blocked Tigray famine declaration](#)
- Ethiopia Insight: [Tigray's once-thriving agriculture sector has been purposely destroyed](#)

- WFP, 6 June 2022: [Hunger, famine and starvation: 750,000 people are in the front line, UN study says](#)
- The Guardian, 20 June 2022: [‘It’s death either way’: desperate Tigrayans flee starvation and forced conscription](#)
- Martin Plaut’s blog, 21 June 2022: [A critique of Tigray’s aid operation and a response from Tigray’s government](#)

## 2. World Agriculture Prize 2021 for Professor Mitiku Haile (Mekelle University)

The Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA) has announced that, Prof. Mitiku Haile of Mekelle University has been awarded the 2021 World Agriculture Prize, in recognition of his outstanding achievements in agriculture and life science education and scientific research. The nomination was prepared by a whole group (mostly members of this mailing list).

See the [official announcement of the award](#) and [Prof. Mitiku’s profile, established by GCHERA](#).

Excerpts from the recommendation letters:

Prof. Zeray Alemseged, Donald N. Pritzker Professor of Organismal Biology & Anatomy, University of Chicago: “Professor Mitiku pioneered the birth and expansion of Mekelle University shepherding the institution from its modest beginnings as college of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources to what is today a prominent Ethiopian university enrolling over 30,000 students. In addition to his leadership activities, he has also been heavily involved in teaching and mentoring students including PhD and postdoctoral research fellows.”

Em. Prof. Seppe Deckers, K.U.Leuven: “The impact of this long-standing collaboration in terms of farmers’ livelihoods but also in terms of academic output was enormous, not only in Tigray Region but all over Ethiopia, where this model of agricultural research for development successfully inspired Jimma University, Bahir Dar University and Arba Minch University”; and “Although Prof. Mitiku has already reached retirement age, he is continuing his teaching and research under the horrendous situation of the on-going war in Tigray. This is the third war he and his family are going through, but he is persevering in his mission, convinced that also this war will come to an end and science-based wisdom will be more needed than ever to rebuild Tigray from its ashes.”

**From the archive:** websites of some international conferences organised at Mekelle University

- HighLand2006: <https://ees.kuleuven.be/en/archive/highland2006>
- Water2011: <https://ees.kuleuven.be/eng/archive/water2011/>
- Livelihood 2013: <https://ees.kuleuven.be/eng/archive/livelihood2013/>
- 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (2019): <http://www.ices20-mu.org/>

See Prof. Mitiku's [acceptance speech](#) as well as his [online lecture](#) presented at the award ceremony.

[Mekelle University also organised a celebration](#), and Prof. Mitiku has been interviewed by VoA, TMH, BBC Tigrigna, Dimtsi Woyane, and FM Mekelle.

### 3. News about diplomacy and peace talks

- Africa Intelligence, 17/6/2022: [EU commissioner Janez Lenarcic expected in Addis shortly](#)
- HRW, 17/6/2022: [EU Should Press Ethiopia for Tangible Rights Progress](#)
- BBC Newsday, 15/6/2022. Kjetil Tronvoll on the new movements in Ethiopia towards peace negotiations with Tigray ([33:51-39:10 into the program](#))
- Africa Intelligence, 15/6/2022: [Abiy sends team to Brussels in bid to emerge from EU's bad books](#)
- ONU info, 14/6/2022: [Érythrée : intensification de la conscription militaire avec le conflit au Tigré, selon un expert](#) [in French] – ([Eritrea: intensification of military conscription with the conflict in Tigray, according to an expert](#)) – see also the [full report](#) by the UN Human Rights Rapporteur
- Reuters, 14/6/2022: [Ethiopia forms body to negotiate with rebellious Tigray forces](#)
- Le Monde, 9/6/2022: [En Ethiopie, des négociations s'organisent en coulisse entre le gouvernement et les rebelles du Tigré](#) [in French]
- Global Citizen, 9/6/2022: [Tigray War: What Does the Humanitarian Truce Mean for People Living Through the Conflict?](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 8/6/2022: [Abiy-Kenyatta talks focus on Oromo rebels](#)
- BBC Focus on Africa: [Tigray war: 'slow but steady' progress, says Obasanjo](#)
- The Critic, 6/6/2022: [Justin Trudeau's heartless hypocrisy](#)
- Radio France Internationale, 5/6/2022: [Éthiopie: le projet de dialogue national inclusif ne part pas sur de bons rails](#) [in French]
- The Africa Report, 2 June 2022: [Ethiopia's new rift: Amhara vs Abiy](#)
- Observador, 1/6/2022: [Etiópia defende intervenção militar da Eritreia no Tigray](#) [in Portuguese]
- Addis Insight, 1/6/2022: [Jawar Mohammed breaks his silence](#)
- Reuters, 31/5/2022: [Eritrean troops shell town in north Ethiopia - U.N.](#)
- Tghat, 27/5/2022: [In Response to Ethiopia's Denial, Tigray Releases a List of PoW Names.](#)
- The Economist, 26/5/2022: [Containing Eritrea, the North Korea of Africa](#)
- Africa Confidential, 26/5/2022: [Abiy's war aims meet geopolitics](#)
- Al Jazeera, 25/5/2022: [Can Ethiopia build on a truce to end war in Tigray? | The Stream](#)
- Bloomberg, 24 May 2022: [Outgoing Somali President Admits Sending 5,000 Troops to Eritrea](#)

### 4. Timnit Gebru slams the 'both sides' discourse related to Tigray

Timnit Gebru, figurehead of Artificial Intelligence ethics, has also been very outspoken on the Tigray Genocide. When challenged with the "all sides" argumentation, she replied: "[Other war crimes in Ethiopia] are not nearly at a scale as the Tigray Genocide, with the state apparatus and its elites'

blessing, spread with impunity and denial. I have zero tolerance for genocide denial. Maybe at the beginning of the war, when people may not have had enough info. Not now. Period.”

“Well educated PhD holders, in numbers, have been talking about Tigrayans as a “cancer” and “weeds” to eradicate and numbers of “decolonization” scholars cheering on this genocide. Nothing less than repulsive.”

- Berkeley Talks: [Timnit Gebru on how change happens through collective action](#)
- [https://twitter.com/timnitGebru/status/1532832594064293890?cxt=HHwWhIC-1e\\_H28UqAAAA](https://twitter.com/timnitGebru/status/1532832594064293890?cxt=HHwWhIC-1e_H28UqAAAA)

Other news items about war crimes and human rights

- VOA Tigrigna, 2/6/2022: [ኣብ ሰሞራ ተኣሲሮም ዝርከቡ ተወላዶ ትግራይ ኣቓልቦ ማሕበረሰብ ዓለም ይጽውዑ](#) [in Tigrinya] - Tigrayans Detained In Semera Call for International Attention. Summary: Following the outbreak of war, 12,000 ethnic Tigrayans were abducted from Aba’ala and detained near Semera town for over 5 months. They are starving and suffering, 76 of them have already died.
- Reuters, 10/6/2022: [In Ethiopia's civil war, thousands of jailed Tigrayans endured squalor. Deadly Detention.](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 2/6/2022: [The Ethiopian border town left in ruins as a ceasefire takes hold](#)
- VOA, 9/6/2022: [Ethiopia Denies Tigrayan Detentions, Mass Graves during Tightly Controlled Visit](#)
- Recently emerged video (17/6/2022) of a mass execution carried out by the Amhara Fano militia, geolocated at Chaffa Robit in the Oromo zone of Amhara Region: <https://twitter.com/Quen10Tarantino/status/1537927787389915137> . This again confirms [a massacre reported](#) in the [www.ethiopiaticraywar.com](http://www.ethiopiaticraywar.com) database.
- NPR, 28/5/2022 : [Ethiopia set a world record for displacements in a single year: 5.1 million in 2021](#)
- The Conversation, 21/6/2022: [Starving civilians is an ancient military tactic, but today it’s a war crime in Ukraine, Yemen, Tigray and elsewhere](#)

## 5. Scientific articles

- Munyaradzi Makoni, 2022. Conflict in Tigray impeding basic care for patients with cancer. The Lancet Oncology. Republished by: <https://twitter.com/TghatMedia/status/1536030172872417280/photo/1>
- Team, V. (2021). [Getting to understand guerrilla mothering](#). In T. O. Pearce, & A. Moraes (Eds.), Global Perspectives on Motherhood, Mothering and Masculinities (pp. 149-174). Demeter Press.
- Wight, P., & Cowper-Smith, Y. (2022). [Mass Atrocities in Ethiopia and Myanmar: The Case for ‘Harm Mitigation’ in R2P Implementation](#). Global Responsibility to Protect, 1(aop), 1-42.

- Nyssen, J. (2022). [Western Tigray in 108 historical and 21 ethno-linguistic maps \(1607-2009\)](#) (Version 3) [Data set]. Zenodo.

## 6. Journalism

Investigative journalist Lucy Kassa was awarded at the Oslo Freedom Forum for her reporting on crimes in the Tigray war.

Presentation by Lucy Kassa: <https://oslofreedomforum.com/speakers/lucy-kassa/>

Sally Keeble: [Lucy Kassa silences human rights forum with details of Tigray atrocities](#)

### Other media articles:

- Le Monde, 2/6/2022: [En Ethiopie, la pression s'accroît sur les journalistes après une nouvelle vague d'arrestations](#) [in French]
- The Economist, 16/6/2022: [Ethiopia's capital is a showcase for its leader's ambition](#)
- The Columbus Dispatch, 24/5/2022: [Ethiopians in Greater Columbus fear for relatives during civil war in Tigray region](#)
- Fordham Observer, 31/5/2022: [Zuher Ibrahim, Graduate Student and Activist Against Genocide in Tigray, Dies at 23](#)
- Washington Post, 9/6/2022: [Facebook fails again to detect hate speech in ads](#) [the article uses hate speech in Ethiopia as the main example]
- TMH, 06/03/2022: [Confronting Cardinal Berhaneyesus](#)
- The Economist, 26/5/2022: [Inside Eritrea, Africa's gulag state](#)
- The Guardian, 25 May 2022: ['I saw an oncologist cry': Tigray cancer patients sent home to die for lack of drugs](#)
- Time, 23/5/2022: [The 100 Most Influential People of 2022 - Abiy Ahmed](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 13/6/2022: [Ethiopia: The tale of a border town ravaged by the Tigray conflict](#)
- Associated Press, 19/6/2022: [Witnesses say more than 200 killed in Ethiopia ethnic attack](#)
- Financial Times, 20/6/2022: [After the war ends, can Ethiopia's economic 'miracle' get back on track?](#)

## 7. Opinion pieces

- Lina AbiRafteh: [Women of Tigray are calling out — are we listening?!](#)
- Teklebirhan Fisseha: [An Eyewitness Account of the First Days of the Tigray War](#) (Tghat)
- Agnès Callamard and Kenneth Roth: [Ethiopia's Invisible Ethnic Cleansing](#) (Foreign Affairs)
- UMD Media, 29/5/2022: [Horn Peace and Conflict Thermometer with Prof Kjetil Tronvoll](#)
- Ethiopian Reporter, 28/5/2022: የመከላከያ ሰራዊት በጀት መቶ ቢልዮን ብር ሊሆን ነው - ከውጭ የተጠበቀው 64 ቢልዮን ብር አልተገኘም [አበይት ዜና] (in Amharic) - "Defence forces budget will be hundred billion birr - expected foreign support 64 billion has not been secured [major news]". Seifasilassie Gebremeskel was puzzled by this: "Ethiopia expects donor countries to cover 64%

- of its defence budget?”, and launched an interesting discussion on twitter - <https://twitter.com/SeifGebre/status/1530982483180806146?cxt=HHwWhICztZ-dkr8qAAAA>
- Medhanie Gaim and Temesgen Kahsay: [Have Ethiopian Universities and Intellectuals Lost Their Raison d'être?](#) Includes: Representative quotes that Ethiopian professors said about the ongoing genocidal war on Tigray (Tghat)
  - Patrick Wight: [Abiy Ahmed's power base is more fragile than ever](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
  - The Montreal Institute of Genocide and Human Rights Studies, 1 June 2022: [Under siege and out of sight: atrocities in Tigray](#)
  - NPO radio, 8/6/2022: [Tigreeërs in de val door enorme blokkade](#) [interview of Prof. Mirjam Van Reisen, in Dutch]
  - Andrew DeCort: [Christian Nationalism Is Tearing Ethiopia Apart](#) (Foreign Policy)



## Digest 42.      **Determined reporters of ARTE TV could at last reach Tigray** **(5 July 2022)**

In June, despite the black-out imposed by Ethiopian authorities, determined international reporters could at last reach Tigray. On July 2, ARTE TV broadcasted their documentary film: “**Tigray: in the land of hunger**”.

You may watch it [in French](#), or [in German](#) – parts are spoken in English and Tigrinya.

[ARTE has informed](#) that “due to legal restrictions”, most probably distribution rights, there are no English subtitles for this documentary film. An unofficial English translation (text only) has been [published by UMD media](#).

All the pain that we attempted to highlight in the 41 preceding digests is confirmed by this ARTE TV broadcast, that was recorded in the village of Bamba in Saharti ([see on Google Maps](#)), in Abiy Addi ([Google Maps](#)), Mekelle and Aksum.

Even if you have already seen the documentary, make an effort to watch it again since you will pick up on so many things... People are simply dying at home because they know that the staff at the hospital can't help them... An eleven years' old boy, eight kilos... Direct culprits, implementing the blockade, are the governments of Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Amhara Region. Additionally, as a summation of international diplomacy, UN Secretary General Guterres allows it all to go on!

### 1. More on Tigray famine and starvation

- UN OCHA, 17 June 2022: [Northern Ethiopia situation report](#)
- The New York Times, 23 June 2022: [When Satellites Capture a Crisis - How one research team is telling the story of Ethiopia's civil war.](#)
- The [latest news from Abba Melaku/Father Angel Olan](#): about aid distribution in Wukro, genocide investigation, daily life in Tigray [in Spanish – with numerous photos]
- VoA, 4 July 2022: [Aid Flows Into Tigray Region as Ethiopia's Humanitarian Truce Holds](#) (the title does not cover the content of this article, which is much less optimistic)
- The Ethiopia Cable, 3 July 2022: [Tigrayan lives don't matter](#)

### 2. Miscommunication by the UN

In a [flashy announcement on social media](#) on 29 June, the United Nations boasted that since 1 April, the World Food Programme (WFP) has delivered enough food to Tigray to **feed 5.9 million people per month** – a poor rewording of the original tweet by [@WFPLogistics](#) : “WFP has delivered enough food to feed 5.9 million people **for a month.**”

The announcement then provides a hyperlink to their own [WFP Ethiopia country brief](#), which states: “In the Tigray Region, WFP delivered **food assistance to 461,542 people in May.**” That is far from 5.9 million!

And UN OCHA, in its [situation report \(17 June\)](#): “Food partners in Tigray assisted more than 340,000 people with 5,303 MT of food during the reporting week. (...) Cumulatively between early April and 8 June, more than 20,000 MT of food have been distributed to more than 1.2 million people in the region.”

The reality is that over the last three months, the WFP transported enough food to Tigray to feed 5.9 million people for just one month (out of three). But, because of lack of fuel, only 1.4 million of the inhabitants of Tigray (25%) have been reached. Only 15% of the required fuel and 35% of the cash needed for humanitarian operations has been allowed into Tigray by the Ethiopian authorities.

Feedback from one UN staffer: “It would be more accurate to report on impact than on MTs and trucks that made it through”.

Yet, the UN system, at the highest level, posts jubilatory announcements, rather than telling the truth that they face a myriad of obstacles that prevent them from reaching out to the starving population of Tigray.

### **More on “diplomacy”, or rather “The art of looking away”.**

- Alex De Waal: [A peace process is possible in Ethiopia, but obstacles remain](#) (Responsible Statecraft)
- Devex, 21 June 2022: [Russia, China foiled UN meetings on Tigray famine, says Lowcock](#)
- Martin Plaut, 24 June 2022: [Debating peace in Ethiopia](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 29 June 2022: [Obasanjo's softly-softly approach to Tigray mediation causes frustration all round](#)
- European Council, 4 July 2022: [Readout of the telephone conversation between President Charles Michel and Prime Minister of Ethiopia Abiy Ahmed](#). In a twitter thread, colleague [Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel](#) calls for “actions, not words”.
- In the [UK House of Lords, on 4 July, Lord David Alton](#) raised that starvation is being used as a weapon of war against 6 million people under siege in Tigray. He cited the ARTE TV documentary “Tigray: the Land of Hunger” and called for prosecution of those responsible for atrocity crimes.

### **3. Tigray famine is good business for Abiy’s government**

Just like the Derg military government in the 1980s, the current Ethiopian government actually makes money from the Tigray famine, through sale of fertiliser at inflated prices.

New Business Ethiopia titled on 13 April 2022: [The Government of Ethiopia has spent one billion US dollars for importing fertilizers during the current budget year](#), to purchase of 1.28 million MT of

fertiliser, what corresponds to a cost of 781 USD per MT. On 18 June, Addis Fortune [confirms the information](#), giving more precisions on the purchase price for fertiliser by the Ethiopian Agricultural Businesses Corporation (EABC – governmental company): 650 USD per MT for NPS and 1000 for Urea.

In June, in a [belated announcement](#) (given that rains are there and the fertiliser should already be at farmers' hands), the FAO mentioned that the Government of Ethiopia has offered humanitarian agencies access to fertilizer at a cost of 1350 USD per MT, i.e. **1.7 times the purchase prize** of 781 USD per MT. One could argue for changes in the exchange rate (well below 170% in six months, in any case), but the EABC practice in past years was to resell fertilizer at the price of purchase. In 2022, the government even largely [subsidised the fertiliser when reselling](#) it to farmers in six regions (not Tigray) at 3500 ETB / quintal, what corresponds to 87% of the purchasing prize (or even 56% when calculating with the black market exchange rate for USD).

The expensive reselling of fertiliser to FAO is a means for the Ethiopian government to get hold of foreign currency. For those who have known the Tigray famine in 1984, such predatory practices by the Ethiopian government in worst times of crisis are not new. In his book "[Surrender or starve – the wars behind the famine](#)", Robert D. Kaplan writes about the then Mengistu government: "The famine was good business for the Dergue. A port fee of \$12.60 was charged for each ton of donated grain. This replaced coffee as Ethiopia's biggest hard currency earner. The United States paid \$5 million just to have its first 400,000 tons pass customs inspection". That was back in 1984.

#### 4. How can we help?

After seeing the ARTE report, we get questions: "besides sharing the information, what can we do to help the people in Tigray?"

The main issue is that even UN organisations do not succeed in securing humanitarian corridors (see section 2). The amount of cash that can be carried on UN flights is very restricted.

At a smaller scale, organisations still find ways to organise support locally.

[Weforest](#) supports villages near the Des'a forest.

Also [EthioTrees](#) could recently send project money to Mekelle and Dogu'a Tembien.

The [support action for the Fremnatos](#) home for elderly and disabled in Mekelle also continues.

"[Kvinner for Kvinner i Tigray](#) (KFK-Women to Women)", a nonprofit organization based in Norway is fundraising to help women and girls survivors of sexual violence restore their lives.

And there is the fundraiser organised for the [staff members of the four universities](#) in Tigray.

Individuals depend on money smugglers to transmit cash to friends and family in Tigray. Sending the money to one's *'idir* (traditional neighbourhood social security association) in a village or a town, where it will be shared among all members, is a solution that has also been effectively used. Pictures received in exchange demonstrate how dependent everyone in Tigray is on humanitarian supplies as a result of the conflict and blockade!

## 5. Scientific articles

- Abraha Hailu Weldegerima, Hagazi Tesfay, Samuel Berhane, Leuner, C.J., 2022: [Tigray Siege and its impact on cardiology services in Mekelle University Hospital: a call to action](#). European Heart Journal, ehac295.

## 6. Opinion pieces

- Mulubrhan Balehegn: [Neoliberalism has enabled genocide in Tigray](#) [Ethiopia Insight]
- Soreti Kadir: [Genocide: The Weapon Used to Keep Ethiopia Intact](#) [The Elephant]

## 7. Other media articles

- BBC Sound - Assignment, 30 June 2022: [Ethiopia's disinformation war](#)

“When President Abiy Ahmed came to power in Ethiopia, he was seen as a reformer who was heralding a new era of hope. In 2019, he was even awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. But less than a year later, he ordered a military offensive against regional forces in Tigray in the north of the country. He said he did so in response to an attack on a military base housing government troops. It’s a conflict that has been characterised by an almost constant media blackout in Tigray. In the absence of detailed reporting, rumour, denial and misinformation has been rife. But a few dedicated journalists have been working hard to get at the truth. [Chloe Hadjimatheou hears from one of them \(Lucy Kassa\) as she tries to unpick fact from fiction in Ethiopia’s information war.](#)”

- The Economist, 24 June 2022: [I was a war reporter in Ethiopia. Then I became the enemy](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 22 June 2022: [Eighteen Eritrean mutineers interned in a camp in Afar](#)
- VoA Tigrinya, 14 June 2022: [ፕሮፌሰር ምትኩ ሃይለ ንዝለዓለ ሽልማት በቂዖም](#) [in Tigrinya] (Professor Mitiku Haile obtains top prize)
- Tigray Television, 19 June 2022: [የ2021 የአለም የእርሻ ሽልማት የሎሬትነት ማዕረግን፤ ሎሬት ፕሮፌሰር ምትኩ ሃይለ በመቐለ እውቅና አሰጣጥ መድረክ ተከናወነ።](#) [in Amharic] (2021 WAP laureate Professor Mitiku Haile’s recognition ceremony was held in Mekelle)
- BBC, 25 June 2022: ['ከብ ገባር'ዩ ዝመሃር' ዝብል ሎሬት ሕርሻ ዓለም ፕሮፌሰር ምትኩ ሃይለ](#) [in Tigrinya] (“I learn from the farmer”: laureate of the World Agriculture Prize Mitiku Haile)
- Africa Intelligence, 24 June 2022: [Egypt continues to court Sudan as GERD talks with Ethiopia falter](#)
- Middle East Eye, 28 June 2022: [Sudan launches assault on Ethiopia after alleged executions](#)
- AP, 25 June 2022: [‘Total bloodbath’: Witnesses describe Ethiopia ethnic attack](#)

- Reuters, 27 June 2022: [Ethiopia denies Sudan's accusation it executed Sudanese soldiers, civilian](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 29 June 2022: [Abiy cornered due to inter-ethnic violence in the West](#)
- [AFP, 4 July 2022: Watchdog: Tigray Violence Overshadows That in Ethiopia's Oromia](#)

## Digest 43. Outlook for the 2022 harvest (17 August 2022)

URGENT: The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia has **extended the deadline** to submit information and documentation about alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international refugee law in Ethiopia committed **since 3 November 2020. New Deadline - 21 August 2022.** See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ichre-ethiopia/call-for-submissions>. The format (Word version) may be downloaded from [here](#); submission through the above OHCHR webpage.

IMPORTANT NOTE: this investigation is INDEPENDENT from any parties involved in the Tigray war, despite the fact that the Ethiopian authorities prevented them from carrying out an open field-based investigation. The investigators have been informed about the [Tghat](#) and [www.ethiopiaticgraywar.com](http://www.ethiopiaticgraywar.com) databases.

In this digest, we present an update on the 2022 *kremti* cropping season in Tigray (section 1), on the status of humanitarian aid (section 2), which is directly linked to the blockade of Tigray (section 3). Attention is given to the dire state of National Parks as there are executions, organised poaching and rapine under the motto that the Parks are 'TPLF concepts' (section 4). As usual there is also an overview of recent scientific papers (section 5), opinion pieces (section 6) and media articles (section 7) regarding Tigray.

### 1. Cropping -- ክረማትና

After the failed 2021 harvest in Tigray, we may only hope that 2022 will be much better. So far, we are optimistic – see these photos with [crop stands around Hagere Selam, by 10 August](#).

The pictures were taken by Goitom Gebreegziabher of the Tigray Bureau of Agriculture. You may have an overview on crop stands in Tigray, by browsing the photos on Goitom's twitter account: surroundings of [Wukro](#), [Tsa'ida Imba](#), [Dogu'a Tembien](#), [Kilte Awula'ilo](#), [Gulo Makeda](#), [Irob](#), [May K'inetal](#), [Bizet](#), [Sasun](#), [Indabaguna](#), [Tekeze](#), [Werkamba](#), and [Bora Chelena](#).

At first view, the crop stands seem better than last year. Of course, the harvest itself will not only depend on the current status but also whether fertiliser was available at sowing time, as well as on rains in late August and September.

By and large, crop stands seem to be promising for a good harvest at least for those fields that are in the pictures. Lack of fertiliser may pull down these expectations. Some farmers may still have ploughed late, for lack of oxen. Furthermore, farmers may not have planted optimal crops or varieties for lack of good seeds.

In Goitom's twitter posts, I discovered the use of the word ክራማትና - *kramatna*, "our rainy seasons", with *kramat* as a plural of *kremti*, in other words the *kremti* scene, including the rains and the outlook for the crops and the harvest. With the suffix ን, for "our", ክራማትና expresses optimism. Thank you!

## 2. Humanitarian aid

Fertilisers are essential for the farmers in the Tigray Region in Ethiopia, to avoid a catastrophic harvest like in 2021. Due to the road blockades all around Tigray (by Ethiopian government, Amhara Region, and Eritrea), fertiliser cannot be transported freely, and the only hope for Tigray was a speedy delivery of fertiliser through international aid convoys – convoys that may only leave for Tigray after overcoming the hurdles set up by the Ethiopian authorities.

According to the [latest OCHA report](#), June saw the highest arrivals of food aid and fuel to Tigray, so far, but only 15% of the cash needed for salaries and logistics in Tigray has been allowed by the Ethiopian authorities.

Our colleagues in the field mention that since the agreement to ceasefire, food aid is arriving in insufficient amounts and in majority stored in Mekele. Very little food aid arrived to the woredas in May and June and not all needy people received even for one round (which is 15 kilo per person) due to lack of fuel to transport it from Mekele. The situation is similar in almost all woredas and villages; in Western and some woredas of Eastern Tigray, no aid was distributed at all.

The arrival of fertiliser is considered good news. Even if farmers lacked fertiliser at sowing time for most crops, it was still useful and hopefully possible to apply some amount of fertiliser at a vegetative stage (topping up - a few weeks after sowing). And as teff is sown late in the season, fertiliser can also be used for this crop. However, due to late arrival of the fertiliser, and due to fuel shortages, a large part of it has been stored in Mekelle instead of being transported to the villages and the farmers. If not used, they try to store it properly so that it can be used after the rainy season, for instance on irrigated lands.

Both fertiliser and food aid are only delivered to the woreda centre towns, the farmers have to travel 10 to 30 kilometers with their donkeys to come and pick it from the towns. And then travel the same distance back.

### Further reading on this topic:

- FewsNet, June 2022: [Food aid remains insufficient amid very high levels of hunger and malnutrition](#)
- VOA, 29 July 2022: [Children Dying in Ethiopia's Afar Region Amid Drought and Conflict, Residents Say](#)
- UN News, 8 August 2022: [Ethiopia: Loan from UN fund allows FAO to scale up fertilizers for farmers in Tigray](#)

- 15 July Adrian Van de Knap, WFP. Famine averted, 1.1 million people have been fed. But we cannot bring in fuel. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0cm6jtr>
- USAID, 1 July 2022: [Northern Ethiopia Crisis, Factsheet #8](#)
- Paris Match, 17 July 2022 : [Tigré, reportage au coeur d'une guerre ignorée en Ethiopie](#) [in French]
- TV5 Monde, 12 July 2022: [Éthiopie : un documentaire montre la réalité de la catastrophe humanitaire au Tigré](#) [in French]

### 3. Tigray blockade and (failing?) diplomacy

As the Ethiopian government received again only extremely polite questions from international partners on the Tigray siege (blockade of banks, telephone, internet, roads, etc.), they were bound for an easy response to credulous diplomats: “The same services have been down in Amhara and Afar regional states. The public service providers have to determine how they can resume the basic services. Assessments on security, safety, and legal aspects must be undertaken before the public enterprises resume the services. These public service providers need time to undertake the assessments and craft regulations on how to resume the services.” (The Reporter, [13 August](#))

What the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said is totally wrong: the Amhara and Afar regions receive their annual budgets, telephone is working in Kobo, internet is working in Bahir Dar, banks are open in Gondar and people can access their money... Nothing of all that in Tigray. The roads leading to Tigray have been blocked for years prior to 2020. May we anticipate that diplomats will again “buy” the cheap excuses of the Ethiopian government? The blockade and starvation of Tigray is a major war crime → where are the **sanctions on the Ethiopian government**???

What we see today is that there is not even little hope for negotiated ceasefire or so...

<https://twitter.com/mfaethiopia/status/1559925309184643072>

[https://twitter.com/reda\\_getachew/status/1559924664234905602](https://twitter.com/reda_getachew/status/1559924664234905602)

This week, the Ethiopian army has attacked TDF positions around Dedebeit. The TDF command accuses Addis of breaching truce. (Source: [Rashid Abdi on twitter](#)).

#### Further reading on this topic:

- Channel4, 12/8/2022: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: Truce brings little respite](#)
- Martin Plaut, 6 August 2022: [The EU-US delegation to Tigray: Statements and analysis](#)
- Al Jazeera, 2 August 2022: [EU, US envoys urge Ethiopia to restore services in Tigray](#)
- VOA, 2 August 2022: [What Are the Obstacles to Peace Talks in Ethiopia?](#)
- Damilola Adeyera: [Symphony of Pains: In War-Hit Tigray, Money Saves No One \(Foundation for Investigative Journalism\)](#)
- RFI, 31 July 2022: [Éthiopie: le nouvel envoyé spécial américain appelle à des progrès dans les pourparlers de paix](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: New US Special Envoy Calls for Progress in Peace Talks)
- Access Now, 27 July 2022: [Stranded, suffocated, and in pain: 15 stories from Tigray's internet siege](#)



- TV5 Monde, 26 July 2022: Au Tigré, le désarroi et la famine (in French and Tigrinya) [In Tigray, disarray and famine], with footage in Abiy Addi - <https://twitter.com/JTAtv5monde/status/1552036647797153792>
- UMD Media, 21 July 2022: [Opposition parties in Tigray to World Bank and EU: “stop supporting Addis Ababa”](#)
- Avvenire, 20 July 2022: [Etiopia, il silenzio calato sul Tigray «sta uccidendo un intero popolo»](#) (in Italian) – English translation: [Ethiopia, the silence that fell on Tigray “is killing an entire people”](#)
- CNS, 19 July 2022 : [Priest reports that blockade of Tigray harms church’s humanitarian response](#)
- Sudans Post, 17 July 2022: [Ethiopia’s TPLF says famine in Tigray not averted](#)
- VOA, 7 July 2022: [Tigrayans Not Allowed to Leave Ethiopian IDP Camps](#)

#### 4. National parks

One of the reasons that has moved many international scientists to closely work with Tigray in pre-war years was the great attention that was given to environmental conservation. Now, even the emblematic sites are not spared.

On 11 August, [VOA Amharic reported about the Kafta Sheraro](#) National Park in occupied Western Tigray. We see intentional destructions, because “it was a TPLF park”. Vehicles have been stolen, infrastructure damaged, wildlife poached and slaughtered. Amhara militia leaders even opened a bush meat restaurant in the town of Adebay, at the edge of the park.

Ethiopian wildlife conservation staff told us about another “anti-park” action: well inside the Amhara region where, what may be called the **Guna Park massacre** took place, in late August 2021. After the Tigray forces retreated from the area, the Amhara *Fano* militia rounded up the manager of Mt. Guna Community Conservation Area and several of his employees, all of Amhara ethnicity. They were labelled as TPLF spies and executed in public in Debre Tabor. Also here, the Guna Park had been designated as a “TPLF park”. The killings were not mentioned on the [Facebook website for the Guna Community Conservation Area](#), although it does announce the appointment of a new manager in March 2022.

All this reads as a remake of the Derg-time terror against the **Simien** National Park management: in November 1976 the EPRP guerrilla, and maybe the TPLF as well, had a military operation in Simien. Ten months later, after Derg controlled the area again, their district governor punished the Park by having eight park guards publicly executed in the Debarke marketplace. They were labelled “TPLF sympathisers” because of not engaging in combat with the skilled guerrilla warriors.

#### 5. Scientific articles

- Harry Verhoeven and Michael Woldemariam: [“Who lost Ethiopia? The unmaking of an African anchor state and U.S. foreign policy](#)

- Kibrom A. Abay, Kibrom Tafere Hirrfot, Guush Berhane, Chamberlin, J., Mehari H. Abay, [Near-Real-Time Welfare and Livelihood Impacts of an Active Civil War : Evidence from Ethiopia](#) (English). Policy Research working paper ; no. WPS 10004 Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group.
- Makonye, F., 2022 : [The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's War with the Tigray Region: History, Causes of War, Humanitarian Crisis and Mitigation Measures to Stem Conflict](#). Journal of Nation-building & Policy Studies, 6(1): 73-86.
- Tesfaalem Ghebreyohannes, Nyssen, J., Emnet Negash, Hailemariam Meaza, Zbelo Tesfamariam, Frankl, A., Biadgilgn Demissie, Van Schaeybroeck, B., Alem Redda, Annys, S., Fetien Abay, 2022. [Challenges and resilience of an indigenous farming system during wartime \(Tigray, North Ethiopia\)](#). Agronomy for Sustainable Development.
- UPCOMING: American Geophysical Union, Fall Meeting 2022. At least two research teams will present their paper about the use of remote sensing to monitor the impacts of the Tigray war.

## 6. Opinion pieces

- Josep Borrell: [Time to stop the forgotten war in Tigray](#) (European Union External Action)
- Catherine Dom, Eloi Ficket, Mehdi Labzaé, René Lefort, and Sabine Planel (22 July 2022): [En Ethiopie, une politique de nettoyage ethnique marqué par les atrocités se poursuit à bas bruit dans le Tigré](#) (English version: [In Ethiopia, a policy of ethnic cleansing marked by atrocities continues quietly in Tigray](#))
- Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel, Lyla Mehta, Mulugeta Gebregziabher, and Meley Mekonen Rannestad [Tigrayan farmers need urgent help to face a war-induced famine - Institute of Development Studies](#), (Institute for Development Studies)
- Gebrehiwot Hadush, Mulu K. Beyene: [Re-engaging Ethiopia at the expense of justice won't bring peace](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Åsa Nilsson Söderström: [Stoppa mördarpartiets festival i Stockholm](#) ([in Swedish]; Aftonbladet) – Stop the (Eritrean PFDJ) murder party's festival in Stockholm
- Jan Nyssen: [Ethiopian officials admit using a Biafra-like siege to starve Tigray](#) (Ethiopia Insight) (republished in [Italian](#), in [Arab](#), in [Spanish](#))
- Ángel Olaran: [Tigray es una cara oscura de la ONU](#) [in Spanish] (Tigray is a dark page of the UN)
- Anthony Shaw: [Tigray war: Does either side really want to talk peace?](#)
- Michelle Gavin: [Stranded Somali Soldiers Raise Questions About Horn Alliances](#) (Council on Foreign Relations)
- Tom Dannenbaum, Alex De Waal et Daniel Maxwell : [La faim, ce crime de guerre encore jamais condamné, en Ukraine et ailleurs](#) (in French, Justice Info)
- Asafa Jalata: [‘Ethiopia’s other conflict’: what’s driving the violence in Oromia?](#) (The Conversation)

## 7. Other media articles

- BBC, 17 August 2022: [Tigrayans held in camps returning home](#)
- Addis Standard, 17 August 2022: [At least seven casualties reported in Bosat district; residents blame ‘Fano militants’](#)

- UN OCHA Ethiopia, 16 August 2022: [the return of thousands of Internally Displaced People to Ab'ala](#) – these are Tigrayans who have been held in horrendous prison camps in Semera for many months
- VOA, 15 August 2022: [Ethiopia's Rights Commission Says It Could Investigate Allegations of Land Distribution in Western Tigray](#)
- DIRE, 12/8/2022: [Tigray, l'attivista Gebremedhin: "Sanzionare Addis Abeba"](#) [in Italian]
- AFP, 13/8/2022: [Tigray rebels deny 'direct engagements' with Ethiopia government](#)
- Amici di Adwa, 12/8/2022: [La guerra invisibile raccontata da chi è fuggito](#) [in Italian] (La guerra invisibile raccontata da chi è fuggito)
- NRC, 12/8/2022: [Rechter geeft geen toestemming voor Eritrees feest in Rijswijk](#) [in Dutch] (Judge does not give permission for Eritrean party in Rijswijk)
- The Conversation, 11/8/2022: [Nowhere to run: the plight of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia](#)
- NRC, 11/8/2022: [Vrees voor hate speech en represailles bij Eritrees feest](#) [in Dutch] (Fear of hate speech and reprisals at Eritrean party - The Foundation for Human Rights for Eritreans opposes an event in Rijswijk that would be organized "by the long arm of the dictatorial regime in Eritrea")
- TG1 TV report, 11 August 2022: [Profughi del Tigray in Sudan](#) [in Italian] (Tigrayan refugees in Sudan)
- TG1 TV report, 10 August 2022: [Profughi del Tigray in Sudan](#) [in Italian] (Tigrayan refugees in Sudan)
- TMH, 8/8/2022: [Mapping the war on Tigray](#) (interview Emnet Negash)
- Bistandsaktuelt, 4 August 2022: [Journalister smuglet inn i Tigray, dokumenterte ekstreme forhold](#) [in Norwegian] - Journalists smuggled into Tigray, documented extreme conditions
- UN News, 2 August 2022: [UN delegation returns from human rights fact-finding mission in Ethiopia](#)
- ACHPR, 2/8/2022: [Africa Rights Body Renews Mandate of Tigray Inquiry Commission](#)
- RFI, 29 July 2022: [Conflit en Éthiopie: «J'étais une voix critique à l'intérieur de l'administration», dit Gebremeskel Kassa](#) [in French] (Conflict in Ethiopia: "I was a critical voice inside the administration," says Gebremeskel Kassa)
- La Croix international, 29 July 2022: [Catholic bishop in Tigray calls for an end to "genocide" in Ethiopia](#)
- Politico, 28 July 2022: [Russia's Africa moves force Europe rethink on Ethiopia](#)
- AP, 28/7/2022: [Ethiopia says ready for talks with Tigray forces 'anytime'](#)
- TV5 Monde, 28 July 2022: Ethiopie : les déplacés du Tigré (in French and English) [Ethiopia : the displaced persons in Tigray] <https://twitter.com/JTAtv5monde/status/1552759045240590336>
- TV5 Monde, 27 July 2022: Ethiopie : avec les prisonniers de guerre de Mekele au Tigré (in French, English and Tigrinya) [Ethiopia : with the prisoners of war at Mekele in Tigray] <https://twitter.com/JTAtv5monde/status/1552404918404890627>
- TV5 Monde, 26 July 2022: [Ethiopie-Erythrée : reportage à Zalambessa, ville frontalière au cœur du conflit](#) (in French and Tigrinya) [Ethiopia-Eritrea: report in Zalambessa, a border town at the heart of the conflict]
- Tghat, 26 July 2022: [President of MSF Spain, Ms Paula Gil, Greatly Disappointed by her Ethiopia visit](#)
- Focus on Africa, 21 July 2022: [La diaspora del Tigray rompe il silenzio sul genocidio con manifestazioni globali](#) [in Italian] (The Tigray diaspora breaks the silence on the genocide with global demonstrations)

- NPR, 20 July 2022: [The Ethiopian government has jailed tens of thousands in a countrywide crackdown](#)
- Seife Gebremeskel: [Victory by Tigray-born athletes at World Athletics should put more spotlight on Tigray siege](#) (Addis Standard)
- The Guardian, 29/7/2022: [‘Don’t know if they are alive’: anguish of Tigrayan families cut off by telecom shutdown](#)
- Tghat, 24 July 2022: [Gold Medals and Genocide: A Reflection](#)
- 5000 metres world champion Gudaf Tsegay [denied of commenting on anything related to Tigray](#)
- Let’s Run, 23 July 2022: [Meet the Guy Who Stormed the Track After the Women’s 5,000 at the 2022 Worlds](#)
- AFP, 18 July 2022: [Tigray rebels set up team to negotiate with government](#)
- Addis Insight, 18 July 2022: [I wish I could see my parents celebrating my victory](#)
- UMD Media, 21 July 2022: [Multiple of critiques against Tigray government’s press release on Tigray opposition parties](#)
- Committee to Protect Journalists, 20 July 2022: [Tigrayan authorities in Ethiopia detain 5 Tigrai TV journalists](#)
- BBC, 17 July 2022: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: The beauty queen who risked her life to reach the UK](#)
- Sudan Tribune, 17 July 2022: [Tigray rebels say ready to name team for peace talks with Ethiopian gov’t](#)
- VoA, 15 July 2022: [Optimism of a More Open Ethiopia Fades, Expelled Journalist Says](#)
- VoA Tigrigna, 11/7/2022: [Ethiopian Police Kidnap Wife to Arrest Tigrayan Opposition Leader \[in Tigrinya\]](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 7 July 2022: [Ethiopia’s civil war has doused hopes of prosperity under Abiy Ahmed’s government](#)

## Digest 44. War flares up (25 August 2022)

Journalist and opinion maker Tsedale Lemma: “Whether the conflict spreads or not, **things can hardly get any worse for Tigrayan civilians. Whether they die of a bullet or of a siege...**” in The New York Times: [Fighting Erupts in Northern Ethiopia, Shattering Cease-Fire](#)

|||||

Unfortunately, yesterday war has flared up at the Tigray border. At this stage, it is not sure whether this will settle down or evolve into another full-scale war.

**Some other essential media pieces:**

- Reuters: [Fighting erupts along border of Ethiopia's northern Tigray region](#)
- Associated Press: [‘Large-scale’ fighting shatters lull in Ethiopia’s Tigray](#)
- BBC: Ethiopia's Tigray war: [Fresh fighting shatters humanitarian truce](#)
- UMD media: [Analysis by Kjetil Tronvoll](#)
- The New York Times: [Fighting Erupts in Northern Ethiopia, Shattering Cease-Fire](#)

In a short twitter thread, colleague Kjetil Tronvoll also summarised the situation.

**Kjetil Tronvoll:**

Are we inching towards a new large-scale military offensive in northern Ethiopia? Multiple sources are reporting massive ENDF (Ethiopian army) troop build-up along the Tigray borders, at the same time as the African Union (AU)-led peace mediation has stalled.

PM Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia has so far played the AU - US - EU peace envoys skillfully, simultaneously as he has mitigated the domestic political pressure. If a new large-scale offensive on Tigray is launched, what will the international community do? Do they have any “plan B” for failed mediation?

**Question:** ENDF or Amhara state militia? ENDF has lost a lot of men and equipment.

**KT:** Addis has worked diligently to recruit and train new troops since the declaration of «humanitarian truce» earlier this year.

**Question:** Still, heavy equipment must have been a problem, who supplied this?

**KT:** Usual suspects...

<https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1561967296595345409>  
<https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1562692574892007424>

**See also:**

<https://twitter.com/DrMehari/status/1562351354085101568>

<https://twitter.com/wdavison10/status/1562429585761124357>

<https://twitter.com/NaudtsJozef/status/1562532773826789378>

<https://twitter.com/NaudtsJozef/status/1562533004865458179>

## Digest 45.        **Second invasion of Tigray, by the tripartite Ethiopia-Amhara-Eritrea (25 August 2022)**

Things are not going well, and the situation looks like a clear attempt of a second invasion of Tigray, by the tripartite Ethiopia/Amhara/Eritrea. Unlike the 2020 situation, the Tigray military seems better prepared, and having seen the war crimes including starvation organised by PM Abiy Ahmed and associates, all are aware what is ahead... Civilian casualties on the martyred and exhausted Tigrayan society will be extreme. @ANTONIO GUTERRES et al., STOP LOOKING AWAY, THIS IS THE [DEADLIEST WAR IN THE WORLD](#)!!!

Most recent, comprehensive news:

- Reuters, 1 September: [Ethiopian, Eritrean forces clash with Tigrayan forces in the north](#)
- BBC, 1 September: [Ethiopia civil war: Why fighting has resumed in Tigray and Amhara](#)
- Dimtsi Weyane, 1 September: Thousands of Ethiopian POW march to prison in Alamata <https://twitter.com/Yonigussie/status/1565435038795169792> (shows the magnitude of warfare)
- Bloomberg, 1 September: [Eritrea, Ethiopia Start Tigray Offensive, Dissident Group Says](#)

At the start of the Tigray war in November 2020, many of you signed a Scientists' Appeal for Humanitarian Action. Today, more than ever, we should alert again and take action ourselves. In this digest, you find some recent testimonies from Mekelle and a short overview of actions you can undertake yourselves to help.

### **1. What can we do?**

- Alert media, public opinion, decision makers by any means at your hand: social media, letters, emails, newspapers, ...
- As a scientist, check the numerous [scientific papers on ResearchGate regarding the Tigray war](#), you may wish to recommend them, and share them to your RG network
- Financially support the grassroots initiatives; contact any Tigrayan in your surroundings and they will guide you; money will reach the counterparts in Tigray through formal NGO communication, smuggling or informal ([hawala](#)) transfer systems (Note that since a week, all channels have stopped functioning)
- Share this email to friends and colleagues; if they wish to be included in the mailing list, just send their email addresses to [jan.nyssen@ugent.be](mailto:jan.nyssen@ugent.be)

### **2. Health situation in Tigray, recorded by Dr. André Crismer**

Few days ago, I read a [message from Dr Kibrom](#), director of Mekelle University hospital, in Tigray. He explained that he had nothing to eat at lunch time, just eating once a day. Since more than one year,

he didn't get any salary and any food in the market is at least more than ten times more expensive than before the war. He recognized that, as director of the biggest hospital in the region, specialist in cardio-vascular and thoracic surgery, he has some privilege. He finished his message by saying: "Imagine how hard life is for the common people."

This morning, I have heard about airstrikes and bombs exploding few meters from Mekelle hospital.

Two weeks ago, a friend sociologist wrote me from Mekelle: "Most of our people are physically deteriorated. I don't think most of our people will survive if full humanitarian access, fuel, banking communication, is not opened and the siege is not stopped in the coming two weeks. We, Tigray people, are in a situation whether to survive or vanish, the reason is food and there are also new health emergencies such as rabies, anthrax, malaria in many districts where there is no drug to respond to the emergency. That's why we are under fear."

Few days ago, I also received a message from Y., another friend, after an airstrike had hit a kindergarten. He wrote: "Please pray for us and do advocacy... Your government should call all parties to stop the war. Children and women, and all civilians in Tigray, Afar and Amahara and all of Ethiopia are suffering... "

And today, I've read a message from sister M., coordinator of the Daughters of Charity in Tigray: "Please pray for us and be our voice... Dark clouds loom over Tigray because war has broken out once again and this afternoon, we had an airstrike in Mekelle killing innocent children in one of the schools... In silence, months have passed with each day bringing new horrors forever marking the minds of innocent civilians who got caught up in the tide of such a hate-filled attack... This is beyond words and comprehension, and so hard to imagine that so very little can be done to stop it from happening again. It is painful to watch the poor we treated with much love succumb to hunger, while food sits just beyond their reach. I can not imagine how they will survive after the hardships that they had endured... In the name of the poor, please advocate for this madness to end, as your support is critically needed right now. This is the juncture from which there will be no return, and in such time, it would show how humanity could prevail over injustice and cruelty..."

#### Further reading:

- Dujarric: even with the ceasefire, humanitarian aid provided was only a trickle of what was needed - <https://twitter.com/Yonigussie/status/1562910584114397184>
- Reuters, 26/8/2022: [Air strike on playground kills 7 in Ethiopia's Tigray region - hospital](#)
- Mary's Meals, 30 August: [The world must speak up for Ethiopia - A devastating update from our partner in Tigray](#)
- AFP, 30 August: [Air Strike Hits Tigray Capital Mekele: Rebels, Hospital](#)
- University World News, 1 September: [Anxiety in university city as conflict returns to Tigray](#)
- Omna Tigray: [Situation report August 2022](#)
- RTBF, 26/08/2022: [Le cri du coeur du chef de l'OMS sur la situation au Tigré : "Je ne sais même pas lesquels de mes proches sont morts ou vivants"](#) [in French]
- RFI, 26 August: [Éthiopie: frappe aérienne meurtrière sur la capitale du Tigré, Mekele](#) [in French]



- France24, 27 August: [Ethiopia airstrike on Tigray: 'Worryingly high chance this escalates into return to full-scale war'](#)
- RFI, 31/8/2022: [Éthiopie: un hôpital de Mekele touché dans de nouveaux bombardements](#) [in French]
- ONU info, 30/8/2022: [Ethiopie : l'UNICEF alerte sur le sort des enfants, des « victimes innocentes » de la reprise des combats au Tigré](#) [in French]

### 3. Scientific publications

- Matshanda, N. 2022: [Ethiopia's civil wars: postcolonial modernity and the violence of contested nationhood](#). Nations and Nationalism
- Cousins, S., 2022. "[Every challenge is here](#)": fistula in Ethiopia. The Lancet
- Mulugeta Gebregziabher, Cochran, JJ, 2022: [Statistics in a civil war - The case of the Tigray health system](#). Royal Statistical Society
- Sintayoh Fissaha Geberegiabher, Shahid Islam, 2022. [Voices of Tigray Women on the 2020 Election: The Freedom to Vote](#). International Journal of Regional Development
- Suleimenova, D., Low, W., Groen, D., 2022. [An Agent-Based Forced Displacement Simulation: A Case Study of the Tigray Crisis](#). Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 13353

### 4. Opinion pieces

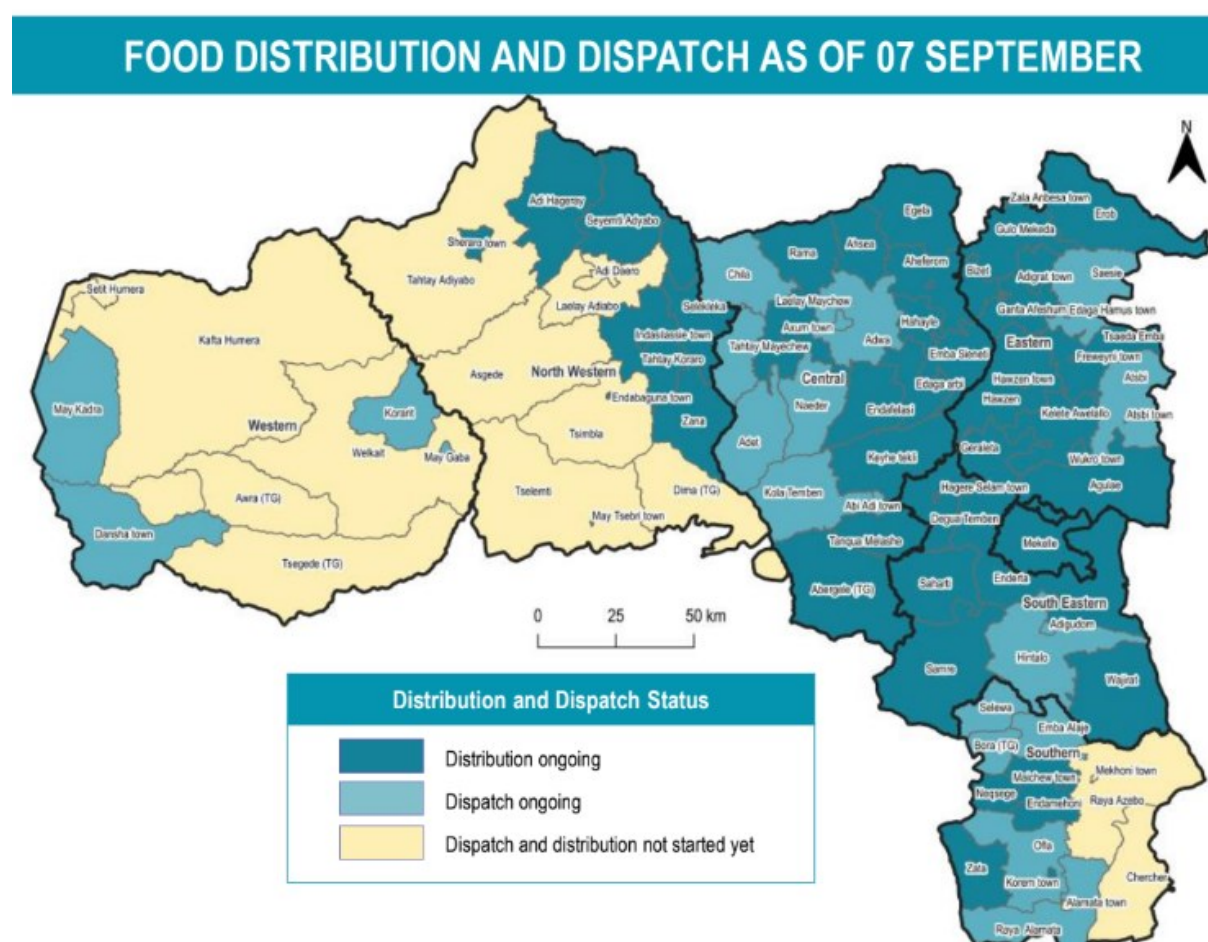
- Birhan Gebrekristos Mezgebu: [Days under siege](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Kenneth Roth: [Africa Must Do Its Part to Break Ethiopia's Abusive Tigray Siege](#) (Foreign Policy)
- Michael Rubin: [The World Bank Gave Abiy Ahmed's War a Lifeline](#) (1945)
- Alex de Waal: ['Peace process' is dead, as is fragile ceasefire in Ethiopia](#) (Responsible Statecraft)
- Aklilu Hailemichael (Official Representative of the Government of Tigray to Europe): [Why the peace process between Ethiopian government and Tigray government failed and fighting has resumed](#)
- Alex

### 5. Others

- NZZ Magazin, 27/8/2022: [Where is the Eritrean dictatorship collecting money in this photo, in Africa or in Valais?](#) The Eritrean regime organizes controversial propaganda events in Switzerland.
- BBC Newsday, 29 August 2022. Situation in [Ethiopia, end of the truce](#), with Rashid Abdi. Start at 26:50 in the broadcast.
- The Star (Kenya), 30 August: [UN says aid delivery to Tigray suspended](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 31 August: [Ethiopia: Civilians in Western Oromia Left Unprotected](#)
- The Economist, 25 August: [Two ethnic revolts rack Ethiopia at the same time](#)
- Tigray Media House, 1 September: Eritrea confirms it has launched a new offensive on Tigray. <https://twitter.com/Tmhtvnews/status/1565368711560691712>
- Aljazeera, 27/8/2022: [What triggered the latest fighting in Tigray?](#)

## Digest 46. Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia == Universities continue funding the war (27 September 2022)

On 11 September, the Ethiopian new year 2015 has started, again under dire conditions. Almost two years of war, and the necessary time lag is already there for international investigations – expectedly, as they have been exposed, the Ethiopian government rejected the outcomes of the ICHREE investigations (section 1). Further, this digest stresses the siege and starvation (section 2), as well as the ways in which Ethiopian universities are funding the war on Tigray (section 3). For the war situation itself (and an emerging peace movement), we refer to press articles (section 5). We also give attention to the attempts of the Eritrean dictatorship to continue controlling the refugees that have fled that very country, and the increasing resistance to this (section 7). There are also some new scientific publications (section 8), as well as opinion pieces about the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe (section 9).



Source: [Ethiopia Food Cluster](#) (14 September 2022) – note that in the woredas along the Eritrean border, only the southern part could be accessed

## 1. Human rights and massacres in Tigray and Ethiopia

Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) (19 September 2021). (It may be downloaded from:

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/regularsession/session51/2022-09-19/A\\_HRC\\_51\\_46\\_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/regularsession/session51/2022-09-19/A_HRC_51_46_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx))

**Summary:** In the present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-33/1, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia presents its initial findings. The report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that violations, such as extrajudicial killings, rape, sexual violence, and starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare have been committed in Ethiopia since 3 November 2020. The Commission finds reasonable grounds to believe that, in several instances, these violations amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The report provides an assessment of transitional justice developments and makes urgent recommendations.

Totally in line with the [Tigray War database](#), as well as our [Atlas of the Humanitarian Situation in Tigray](#), the ICHREE writes:

101. Credible information indicates **large-scale killings committed by EDF and ENDF** forces between November 2020 and June 2021, including the killing of hundreds of people in **Axum** and the killing of scores of people in Maryam Dengelat in November 2020. Large-scale killings also seem to have occurred in Mai Kadra, Adigrat and surrounding areas from November 2020; Bora and **Mahbere Dego** in January 2021; and Kola Tembien in February 2021. In most cases, the ENDF or EDF appeared to target Tigrayan men and boys perceived to be of fighting age. Community and religious leaders who were men also appear to have been targeted.

102. Witnesses **strongly implicate the EDF** in these atrocities. The Commission has identified several EDF members who were present during attacks or were reported to be giving orders. Survivors of killings in Zalambessa say they are unable to return home because of EDF troops in the town, as well as landmine contamination. The Commission recommends further investigation into the EDF's conduct during its ongoing presence in Ethiopia.

(EDF = Eritrean army; ENDF = Ethiopian army)

One of the core issues that hindered the investigation is that **UN offices in Addis Ababa** are largely supportive of Abiy Ahmed. As the ICHREE writes: "Requests to various UN entities operating in Ethiopia to share documents and materials of interest were largely deflected, or responded to after an inordinate delay."

On 3 September, Arte TV reported on the **Mahbere Dego** massacre in Tigray, that happened in January 2021. Journalists Charles Emptaz and Olivier Jobard have met relatives of the victims and soldiers who

were part of the death squad: [Ethiopie : un massacre ordinaire](#) [in French and Amharic]. See also our database: <https://www.ethiopiaticgraywar.com/incident.php?id=I00469>

It might be good to remind the readers also that the restrictions imposed by the Ethiopian government on journalists (we don't even speak about press in Eritrea...), resulted in the news of the **Aksum** massacre reaching the international media only in February 2021, thanks to an [article by Cara Anna of the AP news agency](#). Just after that, the Ethiopian Ambassador in Brussels, Hirut Zemene, arrogantly replied to a VRT journalist that the Aksum massacre had not happened; she said that just making an allusion to the Aksum massacre is "a very, very crazy idea". <https://twitter.com/tvbempt/status/1396004979689787394>

The Ethiopian government has **rejected** the ICHREE report; the Tigray government invited ICHREE to carry out field investigations.

#### Further reading

- Le Monde , 3 September 2022: [Ethiopie : au Tigré, la mort en direct](#)
- Reuters, 3 September 2022: [Gunmen kill more than 40 people in Ethiopia's Oromiya region - residents](#)
- Addis Standard, 8 September 2022: [UN Rights Experts urge Security Council to keep Ethiopia, Horn situation on its agenda; say Eritrean troops engaged in Tigray hostilities](#)
- Euronews, 16 September 2022: [Repeated examples of human rights abuse in Tigray region, says expert](#)
- Radio France internationale, 19 September 2022: [UN report warns of crimes against humanity in Ethiopia](#)
- Associated Press, 22 September 2022: [UN experts detail extensive war crimes amid Tigray conflict](#)
- Al Jazeera, 23 September 2022: [UN: Warring sides committing atrocities in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- The Guardian, 23 September 2022: ['Humanitarian crime': fighting cuts off insulin supply in Tigray](#)

## 2. Siege and starvation

The humanitarian assistance has continued in accessible areas with the stockpiles in the Afar, Amhara, and Tigray regions, despite the resumption of fighting.

In Tigray, between September 1 and 7, 1.5 million people received assistance in the form of almost 25,000 tonnes of food. Priority has been given to distributing food to accessible areas with a large concentration of IDPs and those locations where the previous distribution (Round 3 of 2021!) occurred months ago.

A significant portion of the food supply was delivered to the woredas in early September thanks to the fuel that had arrived in August. Food partners had around 93,000 liters of fuel left as of September 13; this was only enough to transport 7,600 tonnes of food to 450,000 people.

An additional 250,000 liters of fuel are needed to maintain ongoing food distribution and shipment. Around 17,000 tonnes of food cannot be transported without this extra fuel, and roughly a million people would be left without food aid.

On 26 September, the Ethiopian government stated that international aid organisations should not work in areas where they carry out military operations, such as in Tigray, further confirming their 'Biafra' strategy.

Sources: [Ethiopia Food Cluster](#) (14 September 2022); [OCHA Ethiopia Situation Report](#) (19 September 2022); <https://twitter.com/tvbempt/status/1574464210771349553>.

#### Further reading:

- Reuters, 20 September 2022: [Deadly childhood diseases rise in Ethiopia's Tigray as war hampers vaccinations](#)
- Der Spiegel, 12 September 2022: Bürgerkrieg und Hungersnot in Äthiopien - [Wo Menschen Gras essen müssen](#) [in German] – Civil war and famine in Ethiopia - Where people must eat grass
- Libération, 17 September 2022: [Ethiopie: «Au Tigré, nous vivons un siège total, au sens médiéval»](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: "In Tigray, we live a total siege, in the medieval sense")
- NOS, 23 September 2022: [Eritrea mobiliseert troepen, 'kan genadeklap zijn voor mensen Tigray'](#) [in Dutch]
- Novi Glas, 16 September 2022: [Skoraj 5 in pol milijona ljudi trpi in umira zaradi namerno povzročene lakote](#) [in Slovenian] (Nearly 5 and a half million people suffer and die from deliberately induced hunger)
- Sudan Tribune, 26 September 2022: [Sudan confirms three new monkeypox cases in Ethiopian refugee camp](#)
- Crisis Group, 23 September 2022: [Back to War in Ethiopia](#)
- Africa ExPress, 26 September 2022: [Genocide in Tigray: the shameful public indifference](#)

### 3. Ethiopian universities are funding the war on Tigray

A thorny and unsolved problem is that of communicating vessels between cooperation in university development, Ethiopian universities and the Ethiopian army. On September 21, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education proudly announced that the ministry, its sectors and Ethiopia's public universities had donated 211 million Birr "to the victorious Ethiopian Defense Forces." (<https://tweetstamp.org/1572554841440022528>)

Whereas the substitution of aid funds permits, for instance, World Bank financing to be covertly channeled to warfare, the overt budget transfer from the educational sector to the military leaves budget gaps that would then be covered with funds from international projects.

Economist Patrick Heinisch of Helaba Bank (Germany) refers to this as “a very sensitive topic. The European Union is not directly funding Ethiopian government budgets due to the war. The question is to what extent the EU is indirectly freeing up resources in Ethiopian ministries for military purposes. EU funds projects in health and education totalling €81.5 million”. (<https://twitter.com/PatrickHeinisc1/status/1573209016880209922>)

Hence, in this case, the substitution of aid funds happens very openly and is directed to the military. One can't look past it. Embassies and international universities' foreign departments are alerted: how to explain to taxpayers that the University Development Cooperation financially supports Ethiopian universities, when these universities transfer money to the army?

**See also:** [Database: the Ethiopian public universities during the Tigray war](#)

With regard to substitution of aid funds to Ethiopia, or fungibility as it is called in public finance management jargon, see the recent [podcast by the International Crisis Group](#), and particularly William Davison's statement at around 39:30 into the podcast.

#### **4. The “International” Conference of Ethiopian Studies (ICES21) at Addis Ababa University**

The [21st International Conference of Ethiopian Studies](#), which will take place at Addis Ababa University (AAU) from September 28 to October 1, will be a setback for its organizers. At the ICES20 in [Mekelle \(2018\)](#), there were around 600 presentations. At ICES21, there will only be a little over 200. The symposium would only be international in name because practically all foreign scholars, including the most renowned, declined to attend ([https://twitter.com/rene\\_renelefort/status/1572988266244079622](https://twitter.com/rene_renelefort/status/1572988266244079622)). In addition to the overall situation of the country, a major reason for this setback of ICES21 is the [involvement of AAU in the Tigray war](#). AAU has indeed threatened to revoke academic degrees based on political opinion; the university is also a safe place for genocidal hate preachers Taye Bogale and Dagnachew Assefa. At least two AAU professors of Tigrayan origin were arrested, without reaction of the university. AAU also sent 100 medical staff to the war fronts, and donated 60 million birr to the Ethiopian army.

#### **5. War**

In the meantime the war is ongoing, with Tigray being attacked from all sides, villages shelled, and drone bombings on the towns, and on transportation (including a WFP truck).

- France Culture, 8 September 2022 : [En Ethiopie, pourquoi la trêve a-t-elle été rompue ?](#) [in French, with Mehdi Labzaé]
- Reuters, 26 September 2022: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-food-agency-says-debris-drone-strike-hit-truck-northern-ethiopia-2022-09-26/>



- Heise Online, 17 September 2022: [Friedensnobelpreisträger Abiy Ahmed Ali in Äthiopien: Bomben gegen den Frieden](#) [in German]
- Africa Confidential, 22 September 2022: [Addis and Tigray return to the battlefields](#)
- [Angel Olan writes about the beginning of what could be the ultimate military confrontation](#) (6 September)
- Libération, 17 September 2022: [Ethiopie: la guerre s'enlise au Tigré, «Ukraine de l'Afrique»](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: War gets bogged down in Tigray, 'Africa's Ukraine')
- AFP, 7 September 2022: [Ethiopians from war-ravaged Tigray celebrate holiday in Sudan](#)
- France 24, 2 September 2022: William Davison talks about the dire situation as fighting erupts again between the TPLF, the government & Eritrea. <https://twitter.com/CrisisGroup/status/1565636120259559424>
- CBS News, 6 September: [Truce in Ethiopia's war with Tigray rebels brought little relief. Now it seems to be falling apart.](#)
- Radio France internationale, 15 September 2022: [Bombardements en Éthiopie: «C'est un bras d'honneur adressé à la communauté internationale»](#) [in French, interview René Lefort] (Bombings in Ethiopia: "This is an arm of honour addressed to the international community")
- Associated Press, 13 September 2022: [Ethiopia's economy struggles as war reignites in Tigray](#)
- The Washington Post, 20 September 2022: [The Conflict Testing Ethiopia's Nobel-Winning Leader](#)
- Agenzia Fides, 21 September 2022: [Tigray: the worst offensive in recent times, an emergency for hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians](#)
- Radio France internationale, 1 September 2022: [Guerre au Tigré: «C'est l'échec d'un processus de négociation entamé pour gagner du temps»](#) [interview Mehdi Labzaé, in French] (War in Tigray: "This is the failure of a negotiation process started to buy time")
- The New Yorker, 26 September 2022: [Did a Nobel Peace Laureate Stoke a Civil War?](#) (long read)

## 6. Some signs of fraternity

There have again been demonstrations for peace in Addis Ababa. And in Tigray, people are confronted with large numbers of Ethiopian and Eritrean prisoners of war.

Abeba Gebresillasie owns a small stationary shop in Mekelle. She was president of the women entrepreneurs of the town. A colleague knows her well and visited her during each stay in Mekelle. [In this video](#), she speaks in Amharic in front of ENDF prisoners of war, who sometimes applaud her! Excerpts:

- "Thank God that you are still alive here..."
- All the harm you have done to the Tigrayans, we think about it all the time because we are moms...
- Your moms are also worried about you...
- You too will always think of all the harm you have done to us... some of you have raped women, even raped married women...
- How could you follow people who wanted to exterminate us, the people of Tigray?
- We have nothing to eat, but we give you food and drink because it is our custom...
- You wanted to exterminate us while we thought we were part of Ethiopia... "

- And she ends by saying "excuse me and thank you"

["ለትግራይ ህዝብ የበደለው በደል ይቅር በለን ብላችሁ ፀልዩ" ወ/ሮ አበበ ገብረስላሴ - YouTube](#)

#### Further reading:

- Mail & Guardian, 24 September 2022: [‘Why do we have to keep killing?’](#)
- The Continent, 17 September 2022: [Ethiopia’s new pacifists](#)
- Associated Press, 12 September 2022: [Ethiopia’s Tigray forces say willing to enter peace process](#)
- Radio France internationale, 10 September 2022: [Des pourparlers de paix discrets commencent entre gouvernement éthiopien et rebelles tigréens](#) [in French] (Discreet peace talks begin between Ethiopian government and Tigrayan rebels)
- Addis Standard, 1 September 2022: [Ethiopian Teachers Association, Civil Societies Coalition call for hostilities de-escalation, continued humanitarian assistance](#)
- Addis Standard, 9 September 2022: [Women march in capital adds to growing calls for peace in Ethiopia](#)

## 7. Eritrea, tentacular dictatorship

There has been strong opposition this summer to the numerous "festivals" in Europe arranged by the Eritrean regime and its supporters in diaspora, that are part of a sprawling system to control all its nationals all over the world. As these "festivals" are intended to raise funds for the war, it is worth mentioning the massive opposition of Eritrean refugees, sometimes joined by Tigrayans. The authorities have often cancelled these festivals, as in Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Germany or the Netherlands.

For more information on the Eritrean opposition, it is recommended to follow these online ressources:

- <https://eritreahub.org/>
- <https://www.eepa.be/?cat=6>

#### Further reading:

- Frankfurter Rundschau, 22 September 2022: [Invasion aus Eritrea: Tigray steht zwischen den Fronten](#) [in German]
- Associated Press, 18 September 2022: [Eritrea mobilizes its soldiers, raising Tigray fears](#)
- Alex De Waal: [The Despotism of Isaias Afewerki](#) (The Baffler)
- Martin Plaut: [Eritrea’s foreign festivals: support, finance, and defiance from the diaspora](#) (Review of African Political Economy)
- Avvenire, 7 September 2022: [Eritrea: Decine di ragazzi reclutati a forza dal regime durante la Messa](#) [in Italian] (Dozens of boys forcibly recruited by the regime during Mass)



- Watson, 26 August 2022: [In Deutschland artete es aus – jetzt kommt das «Eritrea-Festival» in die Schweiz](#) [in German] (It degenerated in Germany – now the "Eritrea Festival" is coming to Switzerland)

## 8. Scientific publications

- Fasika Amdeselassie : Trend of maternal mortality ratio in Tigray, pre and during the war - <https://twitter.com/FAmdeslasie/status/1571164170111827970>
- Phillips, J.F., Roy, C.M., Mulugeta Gebregziabher, 2022: [The international humanitarian response to famine in Tigray, Ethiopia: lessons from the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970](#)

## 9. Opinion pieces

- Crisis Group: [Avoiding the Abyss as War Resumes in Northern Ethiopia](#)
- Medhanie Gaim: [Functional Stupidity: The International Response to the War on Tigray](#) (Tghat)
- David Alton: [Tigray is Africa's Ukraine](#)
- Kenneth Roth: [Confronting Ethiopia's Abusive Siege](#) (Foreign Policy)
- Mehari Taddele Maru: [What Ethiopia and Tigray need for peace talks to succeed](#) (Al Jazeera)
- Alex De Waal: [How the International Community is Betraying Tigray—and its Principles](#). Annotating the official script (World Peace Foundation)

**Digest 47. Overt and covert support for the Ethiopian regime by UN staff stationed in Addis Ababa (18 October 2022)**

*"Calls" from every corner for an immediate cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of Eritrean troops, unfettered access, talks, etc. etc. But who can really believe that Abiy and even more Isayas would listen to simple calls without any concrete action to impose them practically?*

[René Lefort on Twitter](#) (journalist at Le Monde, retired)

In this Tigray digest we must again address the worsening humanitarian situation, and indeed insist that the international community must act (section 1). In addition to ongoing famine and bloodbaths, the outlooks for the 2022 harvest are bad again (section 2). Further, the academic community is increasingly alarmed by the Ethiopian universities' support for warfare against Tigray and Tigrayans – the case of the murder of Prof. Meareg Abraha of Bahir Dar University is emblematic (section 3). The massacres and bombardments call for independent international investigations – we reached out to our network to try and understand what happened in Kobo (section 4). One of the bottlenecks that the international community faces with regard to civil war in Ethiopia, is the functioning of the UN offices in Addis Ababa (section 5). Among the many Tigray events organised worldwide, we highlight a webinar on 20 October with Lord Alton, Alex De Waal and Sarah Vaughan: 'Starvation - a weapon of war' (section 6), as well as a fundraising event in Slovenia (section 7).

**1. Worsening humanitarian situation - the international community must act**

The UN World Food Programme has not been able to send its convoys into Tigray since August 22, when war flared up again. Journalists are not allowed in, no telecommunications, no trade, no salaries, no banks, no medical supplies ([babies in Tigray die at four times the pre-war level](#) !) and an awful war ongoing on all of Tigray's borders, especially in the districts along the Eritrean border. The Tigrayans experienced the massacres, rape and other war crimes of the 2021 occupation and try to fence off the new invasion of ENDF and EDF.

According to the [Ethiopia Food Security Cluster](#), between 29 September and 5 October, 414 000 people were assisted with 6535 tonnes of food (cereals, pulses and oil) in Tigray. Due to shortage of pulses and vegetable oil, 316 000 people received only partial food baskets. More food is being dispatched to Asgede to respond to the ongoing influx of new internally displaced people, coming from the embattled Adiyabo district. Due to warfare, most woredas along the Eritrean border are either partially or fully inaccessible for food deliveries. As of 10 October, there remained only 11,600 liters of fuel and 34,900 tonnes of food in the humanitarian stores in Tigray. To complete the ongoing round of distribution, additional 192,000 liter of fuel is urgently needed to ensure continuous dispatch and distribution of 12,500 tonnes of food or 740,000 people will be left without food assistance. Shortage of cash continues to slow down food response, preventing partners from paying staff salaries and relevant costs for loading, offloading, dispatch and monitoring.

The question of using international leverage to lessen the suffering of the Tigrayan people is on the table in light of the recent resolution by the European Parliament and the unambiguous report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts. A gentle but unsuccessful approach towards the Ethiopian government has so far been favoured by the international community. Without waiting for the UN, individual nations can impose sanctions such as halting arms sales, revoking Ethiopian Airlines' landing rights, or cancelling other flagship projects. Individual nations should act while influencing others to take equally strong stands.

**Further reading:**

- Washington Post, 17 October: [Ethiopian soldiers take strategic city in Tigray amid civilian exodus](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 17 October: [New offensive in Tigray brings heavy death toll for civilians](#)
- BBC Africa Eye, 17 October: [Tigray under siege](#)
- Food Security Cluster Tigray, [weekly updates](#)
- National Catholic Register, 14 October 2022: [Tigrayan Bishop Decries 'Devastating Genocidal War' in Ethiopia](#)
- NPR, 14 October 2022: ['Where is humanity?' ask the helpless doctors of Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region](#)
- Tony Magaña: [Tigray famine has higher death rate than 1980s Ethiopian famine](#)
- BBC, 9 October 2022: [Ethiopia civil war: My patients are doomed to die in Tigray blockade](#)
- RFI, 4 October 2022: [Éthiopie: à l'hôpital de Mekele, «nous n'avons plus d'insuline, les diabétiques meurent»](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: at the Mekele hospital, "we have no more insulin, diabetics are dying")
- Die Zeit, 14 October 2022: Die Toten des Friedensnobelpreisträgers [in German] ([The Dead of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate](#))
- The Telegraph, 7 October 2022: ['Our patients come here needing life-saving treatment – we can only watch them die' - Tigray's hospitals are collapsing under the strain of civil war as doctors reveal record numbers of avoidable deaths](#)
- Prof. Mehari Taddelle (European University Institute) on Twitter: The U.N. Security Council's mandate of maintenance of international peace and security is global, not limited to Europe, or those countries with commercial and geopolitical value. "African solutions to African problems" is not a codeword to absolve the Security Council off its charter-based duties. The motto "African solutions to African problems" was essentially a lesson to Africa to take responsibility for intervention to stop genocide after the International Community failed in Rwanda in 1994. Now, this slogan has taken the exact opposite of what it was intended to mean. (<https://twitter.com/DrMehari>)
- Council of the EU, 17 October 2022: [Ethiopia: Declaration of the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the intense fighting in the northern part of the country](#) (*it reads like a compilation of earlier statements only – JN*)

## 2. The upcoming harvest in Tigray (October- December 2022)

A team of Mekelle University and Ghent University geographers has carried out a [survey of the crop status on 262 farm plots in Tigray](#), late August 2022. The farmers will harvest their farmlands in the coming months, and it may be anticipated that yields will be nearly as bad as in 2021.

Some highlights:

- Spring rains were not good and there was little opportunity for growing maize, sorghum or millet
- Though the main rainy season was generally good, shortage of fertilizer led to poor crop stands
- For the 2022 rainfed cropping season, less than 20% of the required fertilizer reached Tigray

### 3. Commemoration of Prof. Meareg Abraha (Bahir Dar University), one year after his murder

On 3 November 2022, it will be one year since we have tragically lost Professor Meareg Amare Abrha. There is now enough inside knowledge to have a strong suspicion that the Amhara Special Forces, Bahir Dar University, *Fano* militants, and secret agents were all involved in Prof. Meareg's murder. In remembrance of their father, his family have created an online memorial page that keeps his cherished memories alive containing a biography, photos, and videos. We hope that even though the family was denied having a proper funeral ceremony, this page will allow us all a platform to come together and share our condolences and keep his memory alive: [Professor Meareg Abrha's Online Memorial & Obituary](#)

#### Further reading:

- [Database: the Ethiopian public universities during the Tigray war](#)
- [Obituary Professor Meareg Amare \(1959-2021\)](#)
- [BDU vice president timidly admits that Prof. Meareg Amare has been murdered](#)
- Curt Rice (rector NMBU, Norway): [Krigen i Etiopia angår oss](#) (Klassekampen) [in Norwegian] (Translation: The war in Ethiopia concerns us)
- Uniforum (Universitetet i Oslo), 30 September 2022: [Kritiserer UiO for æresdoktoratet til etiopisk statsråd: – Ho har sete med politisk ansvar på alle nivå - Etiopia-ekspert Kjetil Tronvoll er rysta over situasjonen til akademikarar i Etiopia. No etterlyser han ei aktsemdsvurdering frå UiO og andre norske universitet som er engasjerte i landet.](#) [in Norwegian] (He criticized Oslo University for the honorary doctorate of an Ethiopian minister – Ethiopia expert Kjetil Tronvoll is appalled by the situation of academics in Ethiopia. Now, he calls for an act assessment from Oslo University and other Norwegian universities that are engaged in the country.)

### 4. What happened in Kobo?

An article was published in [The Guardian \(10 October 2022\)](#) detailing the killing of dozens of people, allegedly by Tigray troops during their recent occupation of the town. The article raised much eyebrows, not the least because it lacked context. It so happens that we know Kobo and its surroundings quite well from previous projects in the Raya area - one of the aims of such projects (a bit naively maybe) was "science for peace", with a study area covering parts of the Tigray and Amhara regions.

The information that we could collect from two sources in Kobo is as follows: “The town is quite big and the large majority of the people are newcomers; in absence of social cohesion, we mostly hear rumours. I personally know one person who was killed, that is teacher Kassa of the catholic school; I don’t know who killed him. Several other people were killed but I doubt whether it was done by Tigray soldiers – there have been many shootings though between the Tigrayan [soldiers] and *fano* or other Amhara militia that got killed. So many bad things have happened in Kobo. When TDF entered the town, they went to the hospitals and took the medicines, that is because there are no medicines at all available in Tigray. After that, inhabitants of Kobo went in group to the catholic mission and destroyed the school, the hospital, the chapel even with its religious objects. Earlier on, they had already stolen all the cows and the iron sheet roofs from the mission’s farm and they shared it among themselves. This was not done by any of the warring factions, this was done by people from Kobo. Similarly, if individuals were killed, it could as well be by *shifta* [bandits], or by *fano*. Of course, afterwards they will blame it on Tigray. There are people in Kobo who are known for making up stories, they like to blame everything on Tigray.”

The contacts reminded me of the continuous vandalism that was done to our own project installations around Kobo in the years before the war, simply because the project was run by Mekelle University.

“There are all kinds of rumours; some inhabitants of Kobo will blame air bombardments and drone strikes to the Tigray army, though the latter does not have airplanes or drones. I suggest not to buy directly the claims that those civilians were killed by Tigray forces.”

Also here, like in all other cases, there is high need for independent investigations. The ICHREE should receive sufficient funds and be allowed to travel all over the country to do its own investigations.

In the meantime, there are large-scale air bombardments and drone strikes all over Tigray, with numerous civilian casualties.

#### **Further reading on massacres in the Tigray War**

- BBC, 16 October 2022: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: Civilian bloodbath warning as offensive escalates](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 27 September 2022: [Renewal of the Mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia \(ICHREE\)](#)
- Reuters, 7 October 2022: [Ethiopia rights probe extended after close vote at U.N. body](#)
- Reuters, 5 October 2022: [More than 50 killed in northern Ethiopia air strike -aid workers and Tigray forces](#)
- AFP, 15 October: [International Rescue Committee Says Employee Killed In Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Associated Press, 15 October 2022: [Aid worker killed in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region](#)
- Associated Press, 30 September 2022: [Witnesses: Airstrike in Ethiopia's Tigray kills civilians](#)

### **5. The UN offices in Addis Ababa**

Since the beginning of the war, observers have been surprised by covert support for the Ethiopian regime by staff of UN agencies in Addis Ababa. This was directly visible in the form of maps with “Amhara” written over large parts of Tigray on maps, or burner tweets posted by official UN accounts.

The report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia also mentioned: "Requests to various UN entities operating in Ethiopia to share documents and materials of interest were largely deflected, or responded to after an inordinate delay." (The ICHREE report may be [downloaded here](#)).

And now ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance, a UK based non-profit organization) published this article: [What's happened to principled humanitarian action in conflicts? The case of Tigray](#), as **part of a series that tells the humanitarian stories behind key findings and lessons emerging in ALNAP's [State of the Humanitarian System 2022 report](#)**.

Citation: "The conflict was heavily politicised at every level, and the humanitarian system was widely felt to be naive in its response to this: too closely aligned to the government, and lacking experience and unity. National staff often held partisan views on the crisis, while many international staff had deep relationships with government officials built over many years of living in Addis. After multiple incidents of partisan social media posts and leaking of online meeting recordings, agencies had to give regular reminders to staff about neutrality and impartiality."

## **6. Webinar on 20 October: 'Starvation - a weapon of war'**

On Thursday 20 October at 7 PM London time (20:00 GMT), the Union Chapel is hosting a webinar titled 'Starvation - a weapon of war' which is intended to develop the discussion from their earlier webinar 'Tigray - the prevention of genocide' ([watch online](#)). Speakers include Lord Alton of Liverpool (co-chair of the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eritrea), alongside academics Alex de Waal and Sarah Vaughan. [Register to attend](#).

## **7. Fundraising for the people of Tigray in Ljubljana (Slovenia)**

Earlier on, we reported about solidarity for Tigray in Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, UK, the USA, also in Italy, France, South Africa and Japan. No way to have the full inventory of all these activities. For now, we wish to highlight an [upcoming event in Slovenia](#).

On Saturday, November 12, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., a holy mass and a concert for Tigray will be held in the Church of St. Mary in Ljubljana - the Franciscan church on Tromostovje. There will be fundraising for the people of Tigray.

### **Some recent articles in Slovenian**

- Družina, 7 September 2022: [Salezijanci zbirajo za Tigraj](#) (Salesians collect for Tigray)

- Novi Glas (Italian newspaper in Slovene language): Etiopski uradniki priznavajo uporabo Biafri podobnega obleganja, da bi izstradali Tigray (Ethiopian Officials Admit Using Biafra-Like Siege to Starve Tigray) – [PART 1](#) – [PART 2](#)

## 8. Opinion pieces

- Meressa Tsehaye: [A referendum is the only remedy for Tigray's problems](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Alex De Waal: [Tigray faces a new onslaught by Eritrean-Ethiopian forces](#) (Responsible Statecraft)
- Alex De Waal: [Why are Ethiopians Dying in Isaias' War?](#) (The Elephant)
- Yonas Nigussie: [By refusing to lift the siege, Ethiopia's leaders made renewed war in Tigray inevitable](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Benjamin Fox: [Europe's forgotten war](#) (EurActiv)
- Michelle Gavin: [Peace Talks for Tigray Delayed - An absence of political will may prove a far harder problem than complicated logistics](#) (Council on Foreign Affairs)
- International Crisis Group: [CrisisWatch Digest Ethiopia](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll & Nic Cheeseman: [Why international peace talks in Ethiopia were unsuccessful – and how to make them work](#) (Mail and Guardian)
- Alex De Waal: [US diplomacy failing at critical moment in Ethiopia war](#) (Responsible Statecraft)
- Asafa Jalata: [Tigray has resisted Ethiopia's far greater military might for two years – here's why neither side is giving in](#) (The Conversation)
- Alex De Waal: [The African Union "Peace Talks" for Ethiopia: Unmasking the Pretense \(Reinventing Peace\)](#)

## 9. Other media articles

- Associated Press, 10 October 2022: [Ethiopia's Tigray forces say Eritreans widen war offensive](#)
- BBC, 13 October: [Ethiopia's civil war: Inside Tigray's capital Mekelle - BBC News](#)
- US Department of State, 12 October: [Joint Statement on Resumption of Hostilities in Northern Ethiopia](#)
- Reuters, 16 October 2022: [Ethiopia is finding it increasingly difficult to pay for its Tigray war](#)
- Associated Press, 5 October 2022: [Ethiopia, Tigray head invited to peace talks in South Africa](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 13 October 2022: [Wie Eritrea den Krieg in Äthiopien befeuert](#) [in German]
- NRC, 13 October: [Strijd in Tigray laait verder op, ondanks geplande vredesbesprekingen](#) [in Dutch] (Fighting in Tigray flares up further, despite planned peace talks)
- The Economist, 7 October 2022: [Eritrea has called up thousands of reservists to fight in Tigray](#)
- The Guardian, 8 October 2022: [Postponement of Tigray peace talks latest blow in Ethiopia's hidden war](#)
- The New York Times, 8 October 2022: [After Secret U.S. Talks Fail, a Hidden War in Africa Rapidly Escalates](#)
- Reuters, 28 September 2022: [Satellite images show troop build-ups in Ethiopia and Eritrea](#)
- BBC, 12 October 2022: [Eritreans hunted down as military call-up intensifies over Ethiopia's Tigray war](#)

- NRC, 23 September: [Hoe Ethiopië door zijn trotse verleden wordt verscheurd](#) [in Dutch] (How Ethiopia is being torn apart by its proud past)
- Expressen, 10 October 2022: [Kyrka kopplas till diktatur – får miljonbidrag i Sverige](#) [in Swedish] (Eritrean Church linked to dictatorship – receives millions in Sweden)
- Reversely, the Eritrean Orthodox Church, which followed Abuna Antonio and remains independent from PFDJ, and the Canonical Archdioceses of North America, Europe and Middle East condemn the bitter war in Tigray and declare a seven-day fasting and prayers from 3 to 9 October. (Statement in Tigrinya - <https://twitter.com/mvreisen/status/1576807040542179328/photo/1>)
- France 24, 12 October 2022: [Western powers urge Ethiopia, rebels to enter peace talks](#)
- MO\*, 1 October 2022: [Activiste Vanessa Tsehaye over de erbarmelijke mensenrechtensituatie van Eritreeërs - 'Ik weet niet of mijn nonkel nog leeft, maar de president van Eritrea... die is er nog altijd'](#) [in Dutch] (Activist Vanessa Tsehaye on the appalling human rights situation of Eritreans - 'I don't know if my uncle is still alive, but the president of Eritrea... he's still there.')
- Reuters, 29 September 2022: [Six million silenced: A two-year internet outage in Ethiopia](#)
- Reuters, 6 October 2022: [Ethiopia, Tigrayan forces accept African Union-led peace talks](#)
- RFI, 4 October 2022: [Éthiopie: l'aviation érythréenne entre en action dans le Tigré](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: the Eritrean aviation enters into action in Tigray)
- WDR, 16 October 2022 : Tagesschau about Tigray [in German] <https://twitter.com/mvreisen/status/1581710294581415938>
- RFI, 6 October 2022: [Éthiopie: les incertitudes des pourparlers de paix en Afrique du Sud](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: uncertainties in peace talks in South Africa)
- The Telegraph, 3 October 2022: [How a new 'Great War of Africa' is raging under the cover of a media blackout](#)
- Die Zeit, 29 September 2022: [Der vergessene schlimmste Krieg der Welt](#) [in German] (The Forgotten Worst War in the World)



## Digest 48.      Peace talks in South Africa (26 October 2022)

At least, after two years of war, there are now peace talks ongoing in South Africa (section 1). Further, this Digest addresses the Tigray death toll (section 2), and Ireland's strong stance in international diplomacy (section 3).



### What is common between Tigray and Ireland?



**GLOBAL HUNGER TODAY**  
CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

**10th & 11th May**

Martyrs Memorial Monument, Mekelle, Ethiopia



The Dublin Famine Memorial  
Dublin quays, Ireland  
Photo: Irish Famine Memorials

**Both victims of famine created by imperial regimes!**

© Jan Nyssen

There is also the announcement of a webinar “Healthcare in war-torn Tigray” (section 4). Humanitarian air and road access to Tigray was halted due to lack of clearances by the Ethiopian government on 23 August. That was the day before fighting resumed... For the people of Tigray, since the international community appears to resign, only God can protect them. See the powerful video of a nightly group prayer in the holy town of Aksum: “God of peace, don’t leave and don’t deny us!, please help us!” [https://twitter.com/Dr\\_HagosAbrha/status/1582486457792352256](https://twitter.com/Dr_HagosAbrha/status/1582486457792352256)

### 1. Peace talks in South Africa

The peace talks between the Ethiopian and Tigray authorities have started in South Africa. To be considered successful, the following should be among the outcomes (as suggested by Rashid Abdi, and further appended by Tim Vanden Bempt):

- Immediate stop to hostilities
- Flow of aid to displaced. Unhindered access for aid agencies
- Restoration of basic services like power, water, banking services
- Negotiated permanent ceasefire
- Accountability, justice and reconciliation

Without the latter, no peace deal will survive as it will end up in another cycle of violence during this generation or the next.

The [Ethiopian Reporter](#) notes that Addis Abeba's appeal for quick aid at the IMF hasn't received a suitable response there. A positive interpretation is that of a strong stance by the international community - that if the peace negotiations fail to produce results, no financial assistance or debt restructuring will be provided, and economic pressure will increase. In a more negative interpretation, one may also think that Abiy needs money, and the only requirement his lenders presumably asked for was that he agrees to pointless discussions. The deal would then be that Abiy receives his financial assistance or debt restructuring, and the lenders save face.

We rather like to subscribe to the conclusion of the Ethiopia Cable's editorial (October 13-17, 2022): Obviously, these types of sanctions can be taken by individual countries, without waiting for the EU or the UN to act. In the US, influential senators have proposed a new sanctions bill "against individual actors who are found to undermine attempts to resolve, who profit from, or who provide material support to any entity that is party to the civil war." Just like in case of international sanctions on apartheid South Africa, which grew from a principled stand taken by the Nordic countries, individual countries should take action against Ethiopia, while lobbying others to do likewise. What can no longer be countenanced are governments throwing up their hands and decrying their lack of influence over the Ethiopian government.

#### Further reading:

- AP News, 25 October: [Ethiopia peace talks have begun on Tigray, South Africa says](#)
- The Guardian, 25 October: [Tigray peace talks begin in South Africa but hopes low for halt to fighting](#)
- France24 English, 24 October: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: Warring sides head to South Africa for peace talks](#)
- ILKHA, 24 October: [Tigray delegation arrives in South Africa for peace talks](#)
- AFP, 24 October: [Ethiopia rivals gear up for South Africa peace talks](#)
- Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 25 October: [Turkish drones are destroying Ethiopia's promise of peace](#)
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 25 October: [Museum Warns of Heightened Risk of Genocide and Mass Atrocities in Ethiopia's Tigray Region](#)

## 2. Tigray death toll

The discussion at the UN Security Council on 21 October, was deceiving, in the sense that [Russia and China vetoed the resolution](#), that was proposed (for the first time) by the "A3" (Gabon, Ghana, Kenya – the three African countries in the UNSC) as well as Norway. [Kenya further challenged Russia and China](#) about why they were contravening an African position. However, it's interesting to note that the US ambassador to the UN used our estimate of the dead toll from the Tigray war. See [her statement's third paragraph](#). She doesn't specifically mention our team as a source, and that is also not important;

the main issue is that this 500,000 estimate makes it to the world news. Being a very senior diplomat, Linda Thomas-Greenfield would not be claiming that estimate unless her coworkers gave her the go-ahead that it is reliable and probably correct. Thus, it serves as another further affirmation of the scale of the catastrophe...

From one of our readers, in relation to US Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's remarks: "I just wanted to be sure that you and your colleagues are aware of the huge contribution that your work has made and is making to moving the dial on international thinking about Tigray. I know it doesn't even begin to be enough, and that the diplomatic process is so heartbreakingly bloody awful that it often feels easier just to ignore it, but without the work that you have done things could have been even worse.

I know it has been a devastating few weeks, on top of a devastating two years, for everyone who cares about Tigray but please know that you are having an impact."

And from another reader: "We must simply continue our advocacy and use every opportunity to keep the eyes of the world on such unimaginable and indescribable man-made suffering."

And these encouragements must be shared with all our readers and our key informants, who all contribute to informing the world of this major humanitarian catastrophe.

#### **Further reading:**

- The Globe and Mail, 22 October 2022: [Surge of dehumanizing hate speech points to mounting risk of mass atrocities in northern Ethiopia, experts say](#)
- NRC Handelsblad, 20 October 2022: [Geograaf Jan Nyssen: in Tigray vallen honderden hongerdoden per dag \[in Dutch\] \(Geographer Jan Nyssen: Hundreds of starvation deaths a day in Tigray\)](#)
- The Washington Post, 21 October: [Official document describes scale of abuses in Ethiopia war](#)
- Amnesty International, 24 October: [Ethiopia: Fears of fresh atrocities loom in Tigray as conflict intensifies](#)
- Ilya Gridneff: [The Threat of Humanitarian Crisis Grows as Ethiopia Ramps Up Tigray War \(Foreign Policy\)](#)
- PR Newswire, 17 October: [Legal Action Worldwide, Pan-African Lawyers Union and Debevoise & Plimpton secure provisional measures relief for Tigrayan victims in landmark human rights case against Ethiopia](#)
- UN OCHA, 24 October: [Northern Ethiopia Access Snapshot – September 2022](#)

### **3. Ireland's strong stance in international diplomacy**

When it comes to international diplomacy, the particular strong stance of Ireland in favour of peace and humanitarian aid to Tigray needs to be underlined. Ireland is a country that knows what is famine, and also [man-made famine](#).

Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Minister [Demeke Mekonnen comes with the strongest threats](#) against Ireland, backed up by Abiy Ahmed's national security adviser Redwan Hussein who also was the Ethiopian ambassador to Ireland, up until 2018. (Redwan was also EPRDF Secretariat Head in 2005).

But Irish historian [Ryle Dwyer points out](#) that throughout the 1930s, the president of the Irish National Council, De Valera was well recognized for his anti-imperial speeches, particularly those before the League of Nations, in support of Ethiopia, and against Italy. In a radio broadcast from Dublin in 1935, De Valera hinted that Ireland and Italy may go to war in order to defend Ethiopia in accordance with the League of Nations' charter. If his suggestion had been taken, either Ireland as a member of the League would have declared war on Italy, or forced it to back down.

Redwan seems even not to have heard about this while he was ambassador in Dublin. More surprisingly is that we did not hear any voice from within the EU diplomacy, or individual EU countries, strongly taking the defense of Ireland.

#### **More about (absence of) international diplomacy:**

- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot: [Tigray war: two years on, the AU has failed to broker peace and silence the guns](#) (The Conversation)
- Alex De Waal: [Will the US use its leverage now to end the killing in Ethiopia?](#)
- Libération, 19 October: [Au Tigré, les succès des forces éthiopiennes font craindre de nouveaux massacres](#) [in French] - Eloi Ficquet, editor-in-chief of “Cahiers d'études africaines”, states that he believes the international community had already resigned itself to Tigray being sacrificed, explaining their unwillingness to strongly intervene in the conflict.

#### **4. Upcoming healthcare webinar on 2 November**

The People's Health Movement (PHM) cordially invites you for the **webinar** “[Healthcare in war-torn Tigray: targeted or collaterally attacked?](#)”, organized by the PHM Tigray circle and the thematic PHM War and Conflict, Occupation, Forced Migration circle.

##### **Speakers:**

- Dr Yiheyis Maru, CSIRO, Australia
- Dr Hailay Abrha Gesesew, Torrens University, Australia
- Dr Fasika Amdeslasie, Ayder Hospital, Mekele, Tigray

**Moderator:** Hani Serag

<https://phmovement.org/healthcare-in-war-torn-tigray-targeted-or-collaterally-attacked-nov-2-2212-pm-utc/>

**See also:**

- People's Health Movement, 22 August 2022: [Statement on Health Workers in Tigray](#)
- People's Health Movement Eastern and Southern Africa [call to action on the war against the People of Tigray, Northern Ethiopia+](#)
- CBC, 21 October: [A surgeon struggles to care for patients through Ethiopia's civil war](#)
- Dr. Kibrom Gebreselassie, Director of Ayder Referral Hospital in Mekelle, calls for continued financial support to the Tigray health workers: <https://twitter.com/AAneniya/status/1583841276503666690>
- NPR World, 25 October: [Conflict in Tigray has led to a collapse of its public health system](#)
- Health Professionals Network for Tigray: [Emergency Fundraising Campaign for the Healthcare Needs of the People of Tigray](#)

**5. Other opinion pieces**

- International Crisis Group: [A Call to Action: Averting Atrocities in Ethiopia's Tigray War](#)
- The Guardian [view on the world's forgotten conflict: Ethiopia's devastating war](#)
- Mistir Sew: [The battle of narratives around the war in Tigray](#) (Ethiopia Insight)

**6. Other media items**

- BBC, 19 October 2022: [Ethiopia civil war: Hyenas scavenge on corpses as Tigray forces retreat](#) (very detailed article)
- AP News, 19 October: [UN genocide official: Hate speech is fueling Ethiopia's war](#)
- BBC, 20 October: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: Nasa shows how a war zone faded from space](#)
- Meridiano42, 26 October: [War on multiple fronts in Ethiopia. Federal army and Eritreans on the offensive in Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 20 October: [WHO's Tedros says narrow window to 'prevent genocide' in Ethiopia](#)
- VoA project: [Terror in Tigray | The Ethiopian refugee crisis](#)
- Eritrea Hub, 19 October: [Empty village streets and hyenas eating the dead: The price of Eritrea's involvement in the Tigray war](#)
- Al Jazeera, 18 October: [Ethiopian army captures several towns in war-torn Tigray](#)
- Meridiano42, 26 October: [Bishop Fikremariam Hagos Tsalm arrested in Eritrea](#)

## **Digest 49.        The Pretoria Agreement: force, famine and blackout are what counts (8 November 2022)**

This digest is largely echoing the Pretoria ceasefire agreement (section 1) between the Ethiopian government and TPLF on 2 November. The context is that the Tigray population has been decimated – literally, between 5 and 10% has been killed through direct murder and starvation; a collective punishment organised by Ethiopian, Eritrean and Amhara governments. The survivors in Tigray are exhausted. The agreement comes very late; there is a mediaeval siege on civilians since two years, without any meaningful international reaction – the genociders get away with it easily. The agreement tends indeed to leave justice and accountability issues to the Ethiopian government.

This digest further addresses the Tigray genocide (section 2), the ongoing warfare (section 3) a seminar held by the Peoples Health Movement on Tigray (section 4), an upcoming round table on The Effects of War on Higher Education in Ethiopia on 22 November (section 5), some news about Eritrea (section 6), an overview of other media pieces (section 7), scientific publications, mostly related to mapping Tigray (section 8), and the slowdown in publication pace of this digest (section 9).

### **1. Might is right**

Among the reactions to the Pretoria agreement, I would in the first place highlight by Alex de Waal on BBC: [Ethiopia civil war: Tigray truce a triumph for PM Abiy Ahmed](#). We had a short discussion with Alex, exploring whether ‘Might is right’ could have been a better title. Indeed, the lesson learned is that force, famine and suppression of information are what counts. Let’s hope at least that people get fed and can return home.

We are now a week after the signature of the agreement. The guns have not silenced, Eritrean troops have not withdrawn, there are no food convoys on the way and no flights with medical supplies. Starvation continues unabated.

The Pretoria paperwork done, the [IMF has already announced](#) that they discuss with the Ethiopian authorities to prepare a new fund program.

Might is right, and ethics are for losers; that it the message they try to deliver.

### **Other articles and twitter threads on the Pretoria agreement:**

- Kjetil Tronvoll: <https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1587924801561440258>
- René Lefort: [https://twitter.com/rene\\_renelefort/status/1587907852559175681](https://twitter.com/rene_renelefort/status/1587907852559175681)
- Alan Boswell (ICG): <https://twitter.com/alanboswell/status/1588798131897974784>
- Tim Vanden Bempt : <https://twitter.com/tvbempt/status/1588091430505005057>
- Rashid Abdi : <https://twitter.com/RAbdiAnalyst/status/1588797762149421056>
- Etana H. Dinka : [https://twitter.com/ittaanaa\\_haftee/status/1588975611032535041](https://twitter.com/ittaanaa_haftee/status/1588975611032535041)



- Mehdi Labzaé: [Éthiopie, deux ans de guerre](#) [in French] (Ethiopia, two years of war)
- The Brussels Times, 4 november : [Tigray at two years: The world's deadliest war](#)
- Mehari Taddele Maru and David Del Conte: [Only Holding All to Account in Ethiopia Will Ensure its Survival](#)
- Webinar : [Understanding the Ethiopia-Tigray Peace Process](#), with Alex de Waal (World Peace Foundation), Susan Stigant (U.S. Institute of Peace) and Joshua Meservey (Heritage Foundation). Moderated by Samuel Gebru (Black Lion Strategies)
- Associated Press, 3 November: [Ethiopia asserts government got '100%' in Tigray peace deal](#)
- CNN, 3 November: [Warring parties have agreed to a truce in Ethiopia's two-year civil war. Here's what to know](#)
- RFI, 4 November: [En Éthiopie, deux ans d'une guerre sanglante](#) [in French]
- AlJazeera, 3 November: [Will the Tigray ceasefire hold?](#) Debate with Kaiderin Tezera (Ethiopian MP and assistant professor of social anthropology, Addis Ababa University), Gebrekirstos Gebreselassie (Chief editor, Tghat.com), and Martin Plaut (Institute of Commonwealth Studies).
- The Economist: [A peace deal highlights the pointlessness of Ethiopia's war](#)
- The East African, 6 November: ['Brinkmanship' cited for break in vital Ethiopia peace signature](#)
- Reuters, 4 November: [U.N. hopeful it can restart aid into Ethiopia's Tigray region "in days" - OCHA head](#)
- The Guardian, 5 November: [Race against time for sick patients after Ethiopia peace deal](#)
- Associated Press, 7 November: [New round of peace talks between Ethiopia, Tigray envoys](#)
- Reuters, 7 November: [Ethiopian and Tigray forces launch hotline as new peace talks begin](#)

**2. Five to ten percent of Tigray's population has been exterminated, and it's not ready to stop  
- May we call it a genocide, please?**

Colleague Kjetil Tronvoll mentions: Few in the world are so experienced to recognise genocide as [Mukesh Kapila](#). In his witness statement on the war against Tigray by Eritrea and Ethiopia, he concludes: «The situation in Tigray is nothing less than a modern genocide.»

See the introductory [witness statement](#) by Professor [Mukesh Kapila](#) to the Subcommittee on international Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development of the House of Commons, Parliament of Canada, 28 October 2022.

That day, lawmakers of Canada discussed the humanitarian situation in Tigray and heard testimonies. Watch it [HERE](#). Witnesses start at 09:09:00. The start of this most interesting session was delayed a little, and then interrupted a couple of times due to the presence of hate speaker (*white fano*) Jeff Pearce who finally imploded. Thanks to Tegar Canada for alerting the commission on this individual's track record.

A summary of the meeting was published by The Globe and Mail, 7 November: [Recognize genocide in Ethiopia's Tigray region, experts urge Canadian committee](#)

See also this comprehensive twitter thread by Amnesty International France [in French]: <https://twitter.com/amnestyfrance/status/1589910532920078337>

### **3. Ongoing warfare**

Besides what is mentioned on social media, here is some additional information that we received from our own contacts on the ground.

There is much shelling on Adigrat by Eritrean artillery. The number of civilian casualties is unknown (“dozens”). The Catholic Ursuline convent of Adigrat was partly destroyed. People are leaving the town to the surrounding mountains because the shelling has become unbearable.

Adwa: by 7 November, it is not possible to move out of the town; the roads to Abiy Addi, Aksum and Adigrat are blocked because of warfare along those roads. The town is quiet, but Eritrean soldiers are marauding in the nearby villages; they are going door to door, looting properties and killing civilians (our witness says: “they are like rabid dogs”).

### **4. Peoples Health Movement webinar**

The PHM webinar on “Health care in war-torn Tigray - 2 November) has been uploaded on the [PHM youtube channel](#). Participants were: Dr Yiheyis Maru (CSIRO, Australia), Dr Hailay Abrha Gesesew (Torrens University, Australia), Dr Fasika Amdeslasie, in direct from Ayder Hospital (Mekelle, Tigray), Dr Altaf Musani (WHO) and Hani Serag (PHM). Watch and share!

#### **Other articles on the catastrophic health situation in Tigray:**

- Addis Standard, 31 October: [Analysis: Tigray’s largest hospital “doomed to collapse soon” due to lack of medical supplies, doctors warn as hospital death rate surpass ten percent](#)
- UN News, 28 October : [Northern Ethiopia facing devastating spike in preventable disease: WHO](#)

### **5. Round Table on The Effects of War on Higher Education in Ethiopia**

The University of Toronto (Canada) organises a round table on The Effects of War on Higher Education in Ethiopia on **22 November** (online and in-person). More details, list of guest speakers, and registration form are available from the university’s [Department of Historical and Cultural Studies](#).



## 6. News about Eritrea

- News24, 1 November: [UK MP calls for sanctions against Eritrea over involvement in Ethiopia's Tigray region conflict](#)
- Newly published: a 40-pages report signed by David (Lord) Alton of Liverpool, titled '[Eritrea's 2% Diaspora Tax and its impact in the UK](#)'. The report evidences the continued collection of a 2% Diaspora Tax by Eritrean consular staff in the United Kingdom; speculates that stopping the collection of this Tax will hamper Eritrea's ability to wage war and act as a spoiler to peace regionally in the Horn of Africa, notably in Tigray, Ethiopia; and highlights the steps other governments have taken to criticise, or halt, the collection of the Tax, making clear recommendations for further action that the British Government could enact today.
- Kerknet, 4 November: [Paus te hulp geroepen voor vermiste Eritrese bisschop](#) [in Dutch] (Pope called to the rescue of missing Eritrean bishop)
- Associated Press, 29 October: [Witnesses allege Eritrean abuses during Ethiopia peace talks](#)
- Martin Plaut: [How Eritrea drove Ethiopia's war in Tigray](#)
- Habte Hagos: [Eritrean Reaction to Ethiopia's Cessation of Hostilities](#)

## 7. Other media articles and opinion pieces

- Blog of Father Angel / Abba Melaku who is in Wukro, 25 October. Besides his own reflections, [Abba Melaku's diary](#) holds many testimonies about survival in Tigray, but also direct echos about the warfare.
- BBC, 7 November: [Ethiopia conflict: Looking for clues in video of forgotten massacre](#) (the Chefa Robit massacre carried out by Ethiopian and Amhara forces)
- Washington Post Editorial Board: [One of the world's deadliest conflicts is reaching a tipping point](#)
- Voice of America, 3 November: ["Reparations for Tigray War Victims!" – UN](#)
- ACAPS' report: [Northern Ethiopia: two years into the crisis](#)
- UNOCHA [country report Ethiopia](#): "High displacements continued to be reported from Central, Eastern and Southern zones. Population movement was very fluid during the reporting period with several secondary displacements reported."
- Mukesh Kapila: [Ending a war that has set new records for brutality — the rocky road to peace between Ethiopia and Tigray](#) (Daily Maverick)
- Filsan Abdi: [I resigned over war crimes against women and girls in Ethiopia. I want justice](#) (The Guardian) - "When I was a minister, senior officials obfuscated and lied, and tried to omit any mention of rape by the government and Eritrean forces from the official investigation."
- UN HQ, 31 October: [Ethiopia human rights report "paints a very grim picture."](#)
- Monocle, 26 October: The UN's former humanitarian chief, Sir [Mark Lowcock, explains](#) attempts to end the war in northern Ethiopia.
- Radio 1, 24 October: [Vredesgesprekken hopen einde te maken aan burgeroorlog in Ethiopië](#) [in Dutch] (Peace talks hope to end civil war in Ethiopia)
- BBC, 27 October: [Adi Daero: Did air attacks hit civilian targets in Tigray?](#)
- UNESCO, 28 September: [Two years on and no let-up for children's education in Tigray](#)

- iNews, 24 October: [The biggest war today is not in Ukraine but Tigray, where WWI tactics are causing 'unbelievable carnage'](#)
- Mark Green: [Ukraine Understandably in Focus, But Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict is World's Largest](#) (Wilson Center)
- Democracy Now!, 28 October: [Amid Ethiopia's Growing Humanitarian Crisis, Peace Talks Begin Over Devastating Tigray Conflict](#)
- Capital Ethiopia, 30 October: [Ethiopia-EU relations](#) (interview Roland Kobia, Ambassador of the European Union to Ethiopia)
- Lyla Mehta & Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel: [Marking the second year of the Tigray war](#) (Institute for Development Studies)
- Die Zeit, 31 October 2022: [Die Ängste der Tigray in Kenia wachsen](#) [in German] (The fears of the Tigrayans in Kenya are growing)
- Die Zeit, 31 October 2022: [Wie ein Huhn mit einer Schlinge um den Hals](#) - Viele Äthiopierinnen und Äthiopier fliehen vor dem Krieg in ihrer Heimat nach Nairobi im Nachbarland Kenia. Doch auch dort finden sie kein Gefühl der Sicherheit. [in German] (Like a chicken with a noose around its neck - Many Ethiopians are fleeing the war in their homeland to Nairobi in neighbouring Kenya. But even there they find no sense of security.)
- The Reporter (Ethiopia), 29 October 2022: [Institutional vacuum leaves IDPs in disarray](#)

## 8. Scientific publications

- Video Online-Presentation by Prof. Wolbert Smidt: „[Why old maps of Northeastern Africa are not old: Cartographic collections as a repository of local territorial knowledge and practice](#)“
- In direct relation to the Dataset: [Western Tigray in 109 historical and 31 ethno-linguistic maps \(1607-2014\)](#)
- Jan Nyssen, seminar at Manchester University, Department of Geography: “Mapping war crimes, humanitarian situation, and failing harvests in Tigray (north Ethiopia)”. See the [Powerpoint presentation](#) (holding numerous maps, photos and references).
- Zemelak Ayele, Julia Günther: [Ethnischer Föderalismus in Äthiopien](#) (ApUz) [in German] (Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia)
- Forthcoming book: [Martin Plaut & Sarah Vaughan, 2023. Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War.](#) Hurst.

## 9. Publication pace of this Tigray Digest

Since two years now, this digest has been a source of information with a direct audience of around 2300 people; in addition it is regularly reposted on blogs. Yet, I wish to inform that its' publication pace will be slowed down. Time for some reflection, and write-up. The upcoming digests should be shorter (no more systematic press review) and spaced in time. Readers who appreciate regular press reviews related to Tigray and Ethiopia are referred to:

- The bi-weekly Ethiopia Cable, you may subscribe at: [dailybulletin@sahanresearch.com](mailto:dailybulletin@sahanresearch.com)
- The EEPA [Daily Situation Report](#) on the Horn of Africa
- Tesfay ASBL – [Nouvelles d'Éthiopie / News from Ethiopia](#)

## **Digest 50. Catastrophic humanitarian situation despite the Tigray deal (19 December 2022)**

In this 50<sup>th</sup> digest, we will again address the catastrophic humanitarian situation despite the Tigray deal (section 1), including some testimonies from the ground (section 2). Further, the murders and other human rights infringements at Ethiopian universities made headlines over the last weeks (section 3). Yet, the Ethiopian government tries to establish smokescreens of normality (section 4), but in Tigray the 2022 cropping season again failed (section 5) and we are far from accountability for genocide and other human rights infringements (section 6).

### **1. Catastrophic humanitarian situation despite the Tigray deal**

EU Human Rights chief Borrell: [Speech at the 24th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights](#) on 14 December 2022: “what is happening in Tigray is the deadliest war. We complain rightly about what is happening in Ukraine, but what is happening in Ethiopia is really awful. The figures that we have is that between 600,000 and 800,000 people are being killed. Can you imagine? And most of them by famine – not fighting, but by famine, cutting humanitarian support, cutting electricity, cutting any kind of public services. And that, for months and months. I remind you that this is being done by a government whose Prime Minister is a Nobel Prize laureate.”

The status of the humanitarian aid early December is that international organisations distributed food to 1.15 million people in Tigray during November, while the government made a single supply to 875,000 individuals. Since October (round 2), Tigray has only achieved 23% of the objective, whereas in Amhara WFP reached 90% for the 4th time, and only 27% in Afar. Trickle aid is inadmissible. These poor distribution rates are fatal after months of being without any assistance, food, or medicine. The Ethiopian government comes with overinflated numbers, as if 95% of the aid-needing people in Tigray have received food aid (see this [twitter thread](#): <https://twitter.com/BurbridgeDuke/status/1600333572052697088>) .

These attempts of aid distribution are a consequence of the Pretoria ceasefire agreement, though, in the first place, blockading humanitarian aid is a war crime, and should not be dependent on a ceasefire agreement.

The [ICRC \(16 December\) summarises](#) its rare footage from Tigray as follows: “Hunger, even among healthcare staff themselves, is everywhere. People have been displaced over and over again.”

The [update by UNOCHA on 15th December](#) lacks specifics about Tigray but highlights the immensity of needs throughout Ethiopia (and that this badly jars with the continued 'prosperity narrative' of the leadership).

The [Chicago Council on Global Affairs \(16 December\)](#) summarizes: “The Ethiopian government is using starvation as a weapon of war against Tigray, inducing a massive famine that requires immediate action from the international community.”

#### **Some additional information on the implementation of the ceasefire agreement:**

- On 15 November 2022, the U.K. House of Lords debated the Pretoria ceasefire agreement. See this state-of-the-art document prepared by the House of Lords Library, 11 November: [Conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia](#) (“The House of Lords Library provides impartial, authoritative, timely research and information to Members of the House of Lords in support of their parliamentary work”). [Lord David Alton called for](#) those responsible for atrocities and genocide in Tigray to be brought to justice and for Eritrean troops to get out of Tigray, whereas [Lord Des Browne set out losses](#) in the world's deadliest war and called for humanitarian aid, ceasefire monitoring and justice.
- Alex De Waal: [Facing famine, Tigray concedes to Ethiopian government, and Abiy](#) (Responsible Statecraft)
- Martin Plaut: [The Tigray deal could end the war in Ethiopia – but implementation won't be easy](#) (The Globe and Mail)
- Fides, 17 December 2022: [Adigrat overwhelmed by more than 100,000 new displaced persons](#)
- The Lawfare Podcast: Earlier this month, officials from the government of Ethiopia and representatives from the Tigray People's Liberation Front agreed to halt the two-year conflict that has been rife with accusations of ethnic cleansing, sexual violence, and famine as a weapon of war. To discuss the current state of the conflict and the prospect of peace, Lawfare managing editor Tyler McBrien sat down with Alex de Waal, executive director of the World Peace Foundation and a research professor at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. They discussed the terms of the recent truce agreements, the irony of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Nobel Peace Prize, and the options for accountability for forced starvation and other crimes committed by both sides. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fng20WqcIBM>

## **2. Testimonies from the ground**

### **Mekelle.**

“I didn’t hear about aid distribution and did not go. Thanks to the money that you smuggled in, I buy food on the market, I never needed to struggle to get food aid. After some months, when threshing is finished, I will go to my village of origin and ask my family for grain”.

“We are very happy by the peace agreement but still the people of Tigray are suffering by the lack of food and medicine (there is no change on the ground except the fighting).”

**Adwa** (on 24 november).

“It is said that the Eritrean army is going back to Eritrea. But the concrete reality in Tigray is quite different. Eritreans are still looting whatever they can find and are going to Eritrea with hundreds of camels and then they come back to Tigray whenever they want. Half of Adwa is still under their control, and in the villages they still harm and kill people.”

**Aksum** (on 18 december).

“The Ethiopian army (ENDF) is in control of the city, Eritrean forces are marauding the countryside. And ENDF is not capable (or doesn't have the mandate?) of changing that.”

**Shire.**

“The Ethiopian army seems to be in control of the city, but Eritrean soldiers are looting the area systematically. The Ethiopian army is trying to prevent it, but stands powerless. No food aid was distributed to the citizens until now; IDPs in the city received food aid.” (Food for max. 100,000 people has been distributed in Shire according to the food cluster).

“Most people stay inside their homes the whole day, there is a curfew in place (not sure if official or informal). Moving from the town to the countryside is not an option anymore, since Eritrean soldiers are roaming there and also because abandoned houses in the city are looted by thieves.”

**May Tsebri.**

“In May Tsebri and the surrounding Tselemti woreda, the Amhara fano militias are looting, stealing livestock and killing, and also in other places along the road to Indabaguna. They were apparently stopped there by ENDF (during a fight or at least a shootout) and driven back beyond the Tekeze river.”

This is a sign that ENDF is not in control of Tselemti (south of the river), but Amhara forces are (like in Western Tigray).

Overall, “third parties” Eritrea and Amhara fano are still violating the Pretoria CoH (cessation of hostilities).

**Western Tigray.**

Amhara TV visited Welkait (Western Tigray) and interviewed an Amhara Regional government official, who declared that Tigrayans have been totally cleansed from Welkait. Hence, Amhara investors, workers, and farmers can go there and take over the land. See the interview here: <https://twitter.com/AAneniya/status/1594336435007811586>

## **Lalibela.**

A.Y. was a driver. He recently joined the ENDF with the promise of an income because he became unemployed. Since more than a month, there are no more messages and there is no trace of him. An ordinary disappearance seems unthinkable. He was so proud of his wife and children”. He may have been killed in warfare – it is common for ENDF not to inform relatives when a soldier is killed in action, to avoid uprisings about the large number of war deaths. A.Y. leaves behind a wife and two children.

## **Arba Minch.**

According to a [thorough investigation by The Washington Post](#) (4 December 2022), Ethiopian guards massacred scores of Tigrayan prisoners in Birbir town (woreda Mi'irab Abaya, close to Arba Minch). ENDF soldiers of Tigrayan origin who were held in a prison camp since November 2020 were massacred in this incident. A witness told us that the massacre took place on 21, 22 and 23 November 2021. The massacre was stopped by an earthquake that occurred on November 23rd morning. The [USGS](#) failed to record this earthquake. However, around Mi'irab Abaya, which is situated in the Main Ethiopian Rift Valley, earthquakes with a magnitude of 4 or higher [occur roughly every two years](#). Therefore, it's possible that an earthquake of lesser magnitude went unreported by worldwide observers. In any case, this earthquake was perceived in Mi'irab Abaya as God's wrath over the ongoing carnage, through the earthquake He gave the order to cease.

### **3. Murders and other human rights infringements at Ethiopian universities**

On 22 November, Prof. Michael Gervers and the [University of Toronto organised a webinar](#) on “The Effects of War on Higher Education in Ethiopia” – speakers were Hagos Abrha, Goitom Tegegn, Kindeya Gebrehiwot, Mitiku Haile, Jan Nyssen, Richard Reid, Wolbert Smidt and Alexie Tcheuyap. Addis Ababa University and the Ministry of Higher Education were invited but did not respond; Prof. Mengesha Ayene, president of Wollo University agreed to participate in the webinar but did not show up. It was a very fruitful exchange, moderated by Patrick Wight (Ethiopia Insight). Proceedings are under preparation.

The German weekly newspaper Die Zeit (7 December 2022) published an extensive article on the murder of Prof. Meareg of Bahir Dar University, both in the [online](#) and [printed version](#). An [English translation](#) has been published.

The article highlights the role of the fano militia, Amhara Special Forces, the BDU STAFF Facebook page and tolerance of hate speech in Ethiopia by Facebook.

Additional information is that the Bahir Dar University management has direct leverage on the BDU STAFF Facebook account manager; Dr. Meareg's murder was also investigated by the BBC, and a day after journalist Chloé Hadjimatheou confronted the BDU president and a vice-president with the BDU STAFF posts calling for Prof. Meareg's murder, these posts disappeared from that Facebook page.

Furthermore, there is Tadeye Asmare who works for [BDU as a communication expert](#) and also as a [journalist](#). He was one of the men who actively encouraged the imprisonment of all Tigrayans in the Amhara region. Among others, he promoted the fano's murder of Wollo university professor Berhanu Giday [in the following terms](#) (23 October 2021): “Action has been taken on Birhanu Gidey === The traitor Birhanu Gidey, a lecturer at Wollo University, was found sending information through radio and GPS to the enemy to capture Dessie and Kombolcha and kill our people”.

#### TIMELINE

9 October 2021: BDU STAFF Facebook page starts a hate campaign against Prof. Meareg

22 October 2021: Murder of Prof. Birhanu at Wollo University

23 October 2021: Tadeye Asmare of BDU celebrates the murder of Prof. Birhanu on Facebook

3 November 2021: Murder of Prof. Meareg in Bahir Dar

#### Further reading

- The Washington Post, 13 December 2022: [Activists file lawsuit against Meta over murdered Ethiopian professor](#)
- CNET, 13 December 2022: [Facebook Accused of Discriminating Against African Users in Latest Lawsuit](#)
- BBC, 14 December 2022: [Meta sued for \\$2bn over Ethiopia violence](#)
- NBC, 13 December 2022: [Facebook hit with \\$2 billion lawsuit connected to political violence in Africa](#)
- WIRED, 13 December 2022: [A New Lawsuit Accuses Meta of Inflaming Civil War in Ethiopia](#)
- The Ethiopia Cable: 8 December 2022: The Tigray War and Academia (available upon request)

#### 4. Smokescreens of normality

Ethiopian Airlines [claims preparing to fly to Tigray](#) for sake of tourism. Yet another Abiy's joke. For two years nobody was allowed to enter Tigray and now they want tourists to go there? To see all the destruction and desperate starving people?

Early December, the UN Internet Governance Forum did take place in Addis Ababa – while 99% of Tigray is cut off from the internet since 2 years, and other parts of Ethiopia also since longer periods. Read more: [The Internet Governance Forum: a spectacle of the United Nations' complicity in the Tigray Genocide – Tghat](#) and [Letter to the Attendees of the IGF in Addis Ababa – Tghat](#).

The Abiy government rewarded Maureen Aching with a senior position at IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa). Remember, [Maureen Aching](#) is the ex-IOM Chief of Mission to Ethiopia who called media reports on gender-based violence in Tigray a “hype”.

The Ethiopian army (and thus government) also [tries to make up](#) that the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) has acknowledged Ethiopian army’s achievement in handling the Tigray War without civilian casualties and destruction of cities.

## 5. Cropping in Tigray

The ACAPS November 2022 monthly spotlight focused on crop production in Tigray. ACAPS is an NGO that provides independent humanitarian analysis. Key findings were:

- The 2022 harvest is unlikely to address the scale of food needs in the region which surpasses the amount of food aid entering;
- The resumption of fighting in late August disrupted harvest activities, while the lack of fertiliser used during planting led to poor crop conditions;
- The lack of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertiliser, and the poor spring rains affected the planting of high-yielding long-cycle crops, such as sorghum and maize;
- Farmers mostly planted low-yielding short-cycle crops, such as teff, because of the abundance of the *kremti* summer rains;
- Rural households have continued to rely on local produce because humanitarian assistance has been sporadic and insufficient, and the blockade of commercial supplies since mid-2021 has reduced food availability in the region; and
- Agricultural activities significantly declined after the start of conflict in November 2020, affecting crop output for 2021, which was only 40% of pre-conflict levels, and leaving significant food gaps.

The report is not available online; I will forward the PDF upon request.

Note also this one: Tesfaalem Ghebreyohannes, Nyssen, J., Emnet Negash, Hailemariam Meaza, Zbelo Tesfamariam, Frankl, A., Biadgilgn Demissie, Van Schaeybroeck, B., Alem Redda, Annys, S., Fetien Abay, 2022. **Challenges and resilience of an indigenous farming system during wartime (Tigray, North Ethiopia)**. *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*, 42: 116. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13593-022-00812-5> The article has been published as Open Access (by courtesy of Springer Nature!).

## 6. Genocide and other human rights infringements

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) invites individuals, groups, and organizations to submit information and documentation relevant to its mandate until 30 June 2023: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ichre-ethiopa/call-for-submissions>



We fear however, that after the softer-than-soft attitude of international diplomacy with regard to war crimes in the Tigray war, and also due to the substandard earlier joint EHRC-OHCHR investigation, the victims and their relatives may have lost hope; hence we expect a pro-active attitude of the ICHREE to collect such documentation.

Furthermore, a friend in Mekelle, while evaluating the possibility to investigate a massacre carried out by EDF and ENDF, mentioned: "The current political situation in Tigray is very volatile. Hence, collecting data on massacres and their broader impact; casualty recording and identification of war criminals is risky for the researchers, data collectors, and data providers."

As the primary accountable of the war crimes perpetrated in Tigray, it goes without saying that the Ethiopian government [continues opposing the work of the ICHREE](#) in the hopes that a cease-fire or peace deal would also include the forgetting of such war crimes.

You may also be interested to read the newsletter on the casualties of the war in Tigray (Uppsala Conflict Data Program): <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/newsletter/issue9.html>. It includes a map of locations of organized violence in the Tigray war: battles between ENDF and allies vs TDF and massacres of civilians.

On 21 November, Michael Rubin wrote in the [Washington Examiner](#): "Two years ago, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and his mentor Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki launched a genocide against Ethiopia's minority Tigray population marked by starvation and summary execution. They targeted men, women, and children equally and cut off the region from international assistance, independent media, and communications. Biden's recognition of the travesty did not translate into substantive deterrence. Abiy simply dismissed a series of envoys sent by Biden. While the State Department welcomed the current ceasefire, Abiy and Afwerki appear inclined to continue their slow slaughter, the arrival of a small number of aid trucks notwithstanding. In effect, Tigray experiences today what Rwanda's Tutsis would have been had the Hutu génocidaires won".

#### Further reading:

- The Critic (U.K.), 10 November: [Flirting with the genocide threshold - Two years of inaction have enabled horrors in Ethiopia](#)
- Amnesty International Belgium, 25 November 2022: [Viol comme arme de guerre : action d'Amnesty à l'ambassade d'Éthiopie](#) [in French] (Rape as a weapon of war: Amnesty's action at the Ethiopian embassy)
- Amnesty International, 24 November 2022: [Ethiopia: Survivors of sexual violence deserve justice and accountability](#)
- BX1, 25 November 2022: [À l'ambassade d'Éthiopie, des militants d'Amnesty International protestent contre les violences sexuelles au Tigré](#) [in French] (At the Ethiopian embassy, Amnesty International activists protest against sexual violence in Tigray)
- This tweet by the former Swedish minister of Foreign Affairs Margot Walström provoked quite some reactions: "There is now a Tigray peace agreement. The truce is a relief to civilians who have suffered immensely, not least all the victims of sexual violence. But no women were seen at the formal peace talks in South Africa -why? More women=more peace." Ms Walström had

been silent about GBV in Tigray over the last two years and her tweet provoked a heated debate - <https://twitter.com/margotwallstrom/status/1592136190203162626>

- BBC Sounds, 18 November 2022: [War and starvation – Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict](#)
- USA today, 21 November 2022: [The largest war in the world: Hundreds of thousands killed in Ethiopia's Tigray conflict](#)
- Le Soir, 13 November 2022: [La province éthiopienne du Tigré est victime de l’une des pires catastrophes humanitaires](#) [in French] (Ethiopia's Tigray province suffers one of the worst humanitarian disasters)
- De Standaard Weekblad, 17 November 2022: [Interview Tigray - Hoe tel je vergeten oorlogsdoden?](#) [in Dutch] (Tigray: How does one count forgotten war deaths?)
- The Globe and Mail, 5 December: [Despite peace deal, Tigray still cut off from world as internet shutdown persists](#)
- La Tribune (Canada), 26 November 2022: [La guerre oubliée](#) [in French] (The forgotten war)
- The Times – Delphic, 10 December 2022: [Former U.S. diplomat draws attention to the Tigray War in Ethiopia during lecture](#) (Elizbeth Shackelford contrasts attitudes towards Ukraine and towards Tigray)
- The [New York Times \(15 December 2022\)](#) on Abiy Ahmed’s presence at the US-Africa summit: “It really broke my heart,” said Eden Kassa, a protester from the Tigray region in northern Ethiopia. “How messed up is it for Biden to sit with a person like this? Maybe this is what presidents do.”
- Michael Rubin: [Samantha Power’s Embarrassing Silence on African Genocide](#) (1945)

**Best wishes for the Holiday Season and for the New Year 2023!**

## Digest 51.        **A unique broadcast in Tigrinya: Cropping and farmers in the Tigray region (26 January 2023)**

A team of eleven researchers, coordinated by the Geography and Environmental Studies department at Mekelle University, have conducted a thorough investigation of the effects of the Tigray War in ten villages in Dogu'a Tembien. The inquiry comprised in-depth group interviews, repeated photography, and field observations. The amount of data gathered is enormous, and we are working together with our colleagues and PhD graduates to analyse it, and publish the results in an international journal as soon as possible. The great priority of this research means that this Digest's publishing will happen at more irregular intervals.



*Group discussion about the community's sufferings as a result of the war on Tigray (January 2023)*

In this Digest No. 51, we highlight a unique broadcast on “Cropping during the Tigray war”, that reached Tigray’s farming communities (section 1) and examine the narrative of normalcy after the Cessation of Hostilities agreement (section 2). We try also to interpret different estimations of the number of deaths in the Tigray war (section 3). Accountability for the civilian victims of the Tigray war is of utmost importance, but it fades away for the sake of *realpolitik* (section 4). There is also the book announcement for “A Survivor’s Story” authored by Goitom Mekonen a.k.a. Getu Mak – he was present during the Aksum massacre in late 2020 (section 5). More practically, we report on some project activities in Tigray (section 6), as well as upcoming events in Zürich and Amsterdam (section 7).

The digest ends with a short overview of recent opinion pieces (section 8) as well as some media articles (section 9).

## 1. Cropping during the Tigray War

As a consequence of our research output related to cropping during the Tigray war, the Voice of America (**VoA Tigrinya radio programme**) broadcast a full hour of interviews (17 and 18 December 2022) with colleagues **Emnet Negash** (UGent, Belgium), **Meley Mekonnen** (NMBU, Norway) and **Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel** (NTNU, Norway), where they discuss farming activities in Tigray, including the progress made pre-war, the drastic damage sustained, and the way forward. Since it was broadcast on a widely listened Tigrinya radio programme, our research findings directly reached Tigray's farming communities. See the full video of the VoA interview with our colleagues Meley, Teklehaymanot and Emnet. The two 30' audio fragments that were broadcast by VoA-Tigrinya have been extracted from this full interview.

[ዘተ ኣብ ጉዳይ ሕርሻን ሓረስታይን ክልል ትግራይ](#) [in Tigrinya] (Cropping and farmers in Tigray region)

## 2. Narrative of normalcy

Following the restoration of normalcy in Tigray (or at least the narrative of normalcy) with the resumption of Ethiopian Airlines flights between Mekelle and Addis Abeba [on January 7, limitations were placed](#). Only children, the elderly, and those with medical issues are permitted to travel. Such normalisation followed by restrictions runs throughout the Abiy reign, beginning with the opening of borders with Eritrea and then shutting them, permitting humanitarian relief and then blocking it, etc. It is all about framing the narrative for the world community by Abiy.

### Further reading:

- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot and Alex de Waal: [Humanitarian Priorities for Tigray, Ethiopia, after the Cessation of Hostilities](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Trouw, 31 December 2022: [Tranen van geluk na wapenstilstand in Tigray, maar de vrede is kwetsbaar](#) [in Dutch] (Tears of happiness after ceasefire in Tigray, but peace is fragile)
- NRC, 27 December 2022: [Nooit eerder was Ethiopië zo onveilig en het valt de premier moeilijk het land te stabiliseren](#) [in Dutch] (Never before has Ethiopia been so unsafe and it is difficult for the Prime Minister to stabilize the country)
- Washington Post, 25 January 2023: [Peace deal ending Ethiopia's Tigray war yet to dispel fear of more atrocities](#)
- Addis Standard, 24 January 2023: [IDP camp sheltering over 54,000 civilians in Abiy Addi, central Tigray, severely hit by food, medicine scarcity](#)
- Abc News, 10 January 2023: [Ethiopians abroad celebrate Christmas with hope and angst after November cease-fire in Tigray](#)



### 3. Guide to the number of deaths in the Tigray war

On 19 January, “Every Casualty Counts” and the Royal Holloway University of London organised a [webinar on casualty recording in Tigray](#). We presented our average estimate of a total number of **civilian deaths in Tigray** of 518k (with a lower estimate of 311k and an upper estimate of 808k) between 4 November 2020 and 31 December 2022. Since the beginning of 2023, there has been further fighting and the civilian deaths need revising upwards. Of these, approximately 10% would be due to massacres, bomb impacts and other killings; 30% due to the total collapse of the healthcare system; and 60% due to famine.

This is certainly not the final overall figure for the entire war. This estimate, indeed, does not include civilian victims in the Afar or Amhara regions, nor battlefield deaths (Ethiopian, Eritrean, Amhara, Tigray and Somali soldiers). For these reasons, several estimates of the death toll are considerably higher than ours. The [800k death toll mentioned](#) by High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, appears plausible.

#### Further reading:

- Süddeutsche Zeitung, 12 January 2023: [Krieg in Tigray - Das Sterben der anderen](#) [in German] (War in Tigray – When others die) - This is just the second non-Tigrayan, independent journalists’ team that managed to report from within Tigray since July 2021 (18 months). The Ethiopian government laid siege on the region and doesn't allow journalists to travel freely, so both the SZ and the earlier ARTE team had to go there in a clandestine way and at high risk. This twitter thread by journalist Bernd Dörries brings the summary: <https://twitter.com/Techjournalisto/status/1613222920712556571>
- Axumawian Media, 16 January 2023: [Humanitarian Aid in Tigray - the reality](#) - With Tim Vanden Bempt
- Financial Times, 15 January 2023: [War in Tigray may have killed 600,000 people, peace mediator says](#).

### 4. Accountability for the civilian victims of the Tigray war – should be top priority for the international community

- BBC Focus on Africa, 16 January 2023: [Ethiopia: Will peace lead to justice?](#) (with interviews of our friend Tim Vanden Bempt in the first 5 minutes, and then Daniel Bekele of EHRC)
- Twitter thread by Michael Sassin: [Germany ignores genocide](#)
- Die Welt, 13 January 2023: [„Wir erwarten prompte ökonomische Kooperation“](#) [in German] (Translation: [“We expect prompt economic cooperation”](#) - Will European Union change policy towards Ethiopia after the visit of the French and German foreign ministers?)
- Mehari Taddele: [As a Tigrayan, I Choose Peace over War, Accountability over Impunity](#) (The Elephant)
- Elizabeth Schmidt: [US Policy Toward Ethiopia Is a Story of Cynicism and Self-Interest](#) (Jacobin Magazine)
- Gimgema, 20 January 2023: [France, Trusted Partner in Genocide](#)

- VoA, 28 December 2022: [Journalist Hopes Coverage on Ethiopia's Tigray Will Bring Justice](#)
- Amhara Militia's Confession of Committing crimes in Alamata, Timuga & Chercher in Southern Tigray. [https://twitter.com/neo\\_tigray/status/1614411464244367362](https://twitter.com/neo_tigray/status/1614411464244367362)
- The Guardian, 5 January 2023: [‘I’m scared to think what Ethiopia will become’: Tigray war refugees fear return](#)

## 5. Book announcement: PRIMED FOR DEATH – just out!

**PRIMED FOR DEATH** - Tigray Genocide: A Survivor's Story authored by **Goitom Mekonen Gebrewahid**. Goitom (a.k.a. Getu Mak) survived the Aksum massacre, among others.

Professor Alex de Waal, Executive Director of World Peace Foundation, wrote the foreword. Blurb notes by Mukesh Kapila and Kjetil Tronvoll.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BRYZQQDM>

## 6. Project activities in Tigray

Throughout the period of the Tigray blockade, development projects have continued to function, though there were poor communication chains. It was often according to the System D, but the partners on the ground have the will to do things and everyone—both in Tigray and among the outside partners—was committed and enterprising.

I am getting very positive news from the [EthioTrees project](#) operating in Dogu'a Tembien and surrounding districts, which they will communicate soon.

And here is also the latest news from Father Angel who stayed with the Wukro community throughout the period of the blockade: "[There are many families in need of microcredit to rebuild their lives](#)"

## 7. Upcoming events

Amsterdam (NL): Friday, 10 February, 19:30. Alarm bell for Tigray  
<https://www.splendoramsterdam.com/agenda/712438/noodklok-voor-tigray>

Zürich (CH): Saturday, 11 February, 19:30. Tigray: the invisible genocide?  
<https://rotefabrik.ch/#/events/21241>

#### 8. Opinion pieces

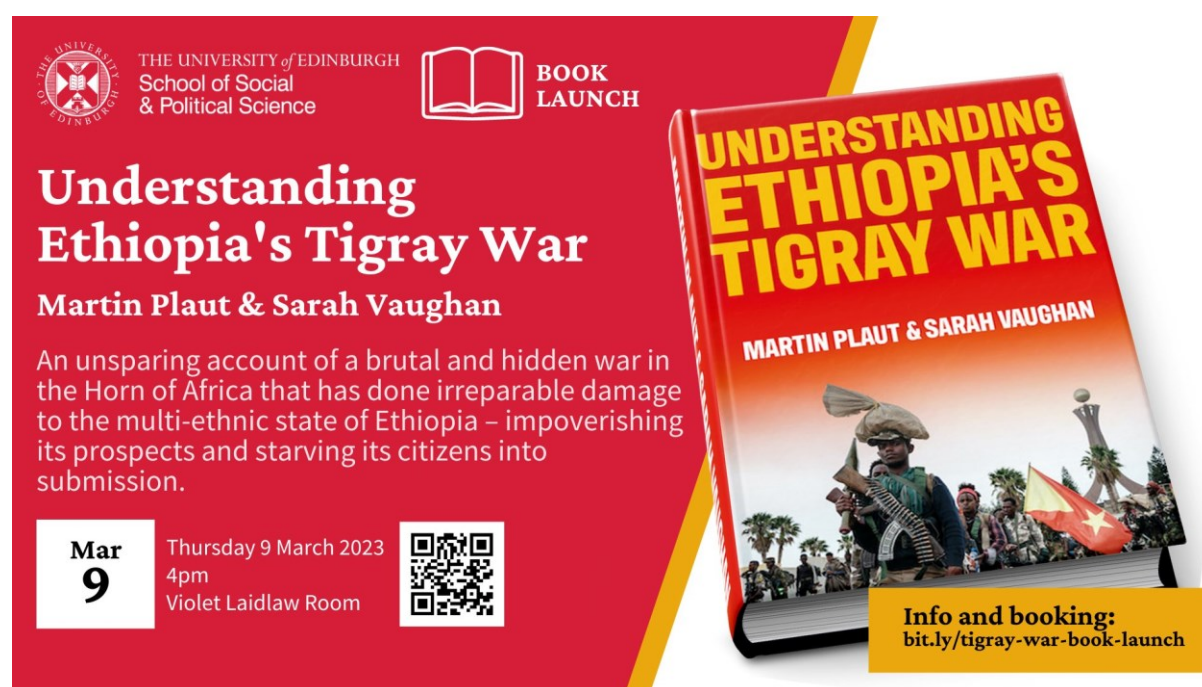
- Magdalene Abraha: [Think the war in Ukraine is the world's deadliest conflict? Think again](#) (The Guardian)
- Asmelash Yohannes: [Because of the war, many Tigrayans no longer identify with Ethiopia](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- David Volodzko: [Tigrayans Need a Path Home After Abiy's War](#) (Foreign Policy)
- Martin Plaut: [What was the Tigray war all about?](#)
- Teklehaymanot G.Weldemichel, Emnet Negash, Gebrekirstos Gebremeskel, Amare Teklay, Jan Nyssen: [Ethiopian universities have infringed on human rights during the Tigray war](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Duke Burbridge: [The Human Cost of Peace in Tigray](#) (Tghat)
- Kjetil Tronvoll & Meressa Tsehay, 19 January 2023: [Post-war election may trigger new conflict in Ethiopia](#) (Democracy in Africa)

#### 9. Other media articles

- iNews, 30 December 2022: [Spotlight on Ukraine overshadows the world's forgotten wars in Tigray, DRC and South Sudan](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 16 January 2023: [Eritrean dictator emerges as Horn of Africa's biggest winner after Ethiopian war](#)
- The Wall Street Journal, 22 January 2022: [Eritrean Troops Endanger Ethiopian Peace Deal](#)
- The Guardian, 18 January 2023: ['If you had money, you had slaves': how Ethiopia is in denial about injustices of the past](#)
- Avvenire, 23 December 2023: Etiopia. [Nel Tigray una guerra senza fine che il mondo fatica a riconoscere](#) [in Italian] (In Tigray, an endless war that the world struggles to recognize)

## Digest 52.      **Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War == Schisms in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (23 February 2023)**

In the first section of this Tigray Digest, we highlight the book “Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War” by our colleagues Martin Plaut and Sarah Vaughan. Second, as our friend Gebrekirstos mentioned, Tigrayan diaspora does big efforts to leave its echo chamber and reach out to the host communities – the Amsterdam and Zürich events in early February are good examples of this (section 2).



**THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH**  
School of Social & Political Science

**BOOK LAUNCH**

# Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War

**Martin Plaut & Sarah Vaughan**

An unsparing account of a brutal and hidden war in the Horn of Africa that has done irreparable damage to the multi-ethnic state of Ethiopia – impoverishing its prospects and starving its citizens into submission.

**Mar 9** Thursday 9 March 2023  
4pm  
Violet Laidlaw Room

**Info and booking:**  
[bit.ly/tigray-war-book-launch](https://bit.ly/tigray-war-book-launch)

While the plight of the people in Tigray and in the wider Ethiopia runs as a red thread through this digest, we particularly highlight the schisms in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, that are existential for the local communities, strongly geared towards religion – the World didn't care about the Tigray people, and more, what is happening to our Church now? (section 3). The next section in the digest addresses some “mafia-style” military support to Ethiopia and Eritrea (section 4), followed by a short review of the internal political situation in Tigray (section 5). We further highlight scientific papers documenting the plight of the people in Tigray (section 6), as well as ways you can help (section 7), against all odds (a brain drain is on the way!). We further list a selection of opinion pieces (section 8), international media reports directly from Tigray (section 9) and other press articles (section 10).

### **1. Featured book: Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War by Martin Plaut and Sarah Vaughan**

Our friends Martin and Sarah, who are very familiar with Tigray, describe the conflict and subsequent hunger in an area that was (and still is) nearly totally cut off from the outside world. The Ethiopian and Eritrean administrations are deliberately pursuing this tactic in order to crush the Tigrayans at whatever cost. This contrasts the current situation from the 1984-5 famine, which killed 400,000 people due to a prolonged drought exacerbated by violence and administrative mismanagement.



Today's famine is the direct outcome of purposeful agricultural sabotage and the cutting off of supplies to the region. Hatred for Tigrayans has been fueled by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and his associates, who have referred to Tigrayans as "weeds" and "cancers" that must be removed and their role in history erased. A language reminiscent of the declarations that preceded Rwanda's massacre. The **University of Edinburgh** School of Social and Political Science organises a **book launch** on **9 March**. [Infos and registration here](#).

- Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 13 February 2023: [Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War: Book Launch](#)
- Daily Maverick, 22 February 2023: [Ethiopia's Tigray war and the 'big lie' behind the century-defining 600,000 civilian deaths](#)

## 2. Two successful Tigray events (Amsterdam and Zürich)

"Alarm Bell for Tigray" was organised in **Amsterdam** on 11 February, with about 90 participants, including journalists, people from the foreign ministry, people who have worked in Ethiopia before, NGO representatives, activists and friends. The very powerful event (a combination of music, dance, and panel discussion) was also streamlined and [recorded on YouTube](#). Tghat presents an [extensive summary](#) and Gebrekirstos highlights the need for Tigrayans to communicate their plight to the public opinion. A local newspaper picked it up: Haarlems Dagblad, 10/2/2023: [Toevallige ontmoeting opende de ogen van Jan Willem Baljet voor een vergeten oorlog in Ethiopië](#) [in Dutch] (Chance meeting opened Jan Willem Baljet's eyes to a forgotten war in Ethiopia)

"Tigray – The invisible genocide?" The room in **Zürich** (12 February) was packed by more than 100 people, half of them Tigrayans based in Switzerland. There was an academic part with nine intervenants (professors in various disciplines and journalists). During the cultural evening, the Tigrayan community was able to share many of their stories. The recording of the event was posted here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpcbMdcq3VI>

## 3. Schisms in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

The schisms in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church may appear trivial to observers in secular Europe, but they shock the country. The grounds for the schism are directly related to the central Amhara leadership's prejudice towards outlying ethnic groups. The Oromo, being the biggest ethnic group, have long complained that they are underrepresented in church leadership. The apostate bishops want that, in addition to the traditional Ge'ez, the Oromo language be utilized in Orthodox services. In contrast, using the vernacular languages, like in civilian life since the fall of the Dergue regime, is the great strength of Protestantism in Ethiopia. For instance, when conducting fieldwork in the far southern Bench district around 10 years ago, I saw that Pentecostal churches were simple buildings in local materials, but full of believers, whereas the luxurious Orthodox churches were much less popular. There, the *P'ent'ay* Church, I was told, employs the local Bench language, while Orthodox churches, in

addition to liturgy in Ge'ez, use Amharic. The southern and western bishops also demand that distinct patriarchates be formed for each region. About a year ago, the Tigray Orthodox Church had already opposed itself against the Ethiopian Church due to the latter's cover-up and even instigation to killings in Tigray. The Ethiopian Church recently issued cosmetic apologies, with no mention of the key hate preachers. Such fallacious apologies were not accepted by the Tigray Church. To add upon the complexity: the Pentecostal religion was introduced to Ethiopia by Scandinavian missionaries, in competition to the longstanding Orthodox, Islam and traditional African religions; PM Abiy is the best known *P'ent'ay* follower in the country. Below are some contrasting opinion pieces and press articles.

- Elle Hardy: [The Religious Zealot Presiding Over Ethiopia's Five Conflicts](#) (New Lines Magazine)
- Jon Abbink: [Has Religion Been Fueling the Politics of Conflict in Ethiopia? A Cautionary Tale](#) (Canopy Forum)
- Mitiku Gabrehiwot: [Setting the destructive role of the Ethiopian Church straight: A rejoinder to Jan Abbink](#) (Tghat)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Current developments in Ethiopian religious affairs may signify something much more profound, deeper, and impactfull than this ancient empire has ever experienced](#). (Twitter thread)
- Ethiopian Cable, 9 February 2023: The Church, Rastafarians and the Messiah Complex (available upon request)
- Addis Standard, 10 February 2023: [Synod Secretariat sends letters to five Tigray Archbishops seeking "reconciliation", blames "political conspiracy" for rift](#)
- Luxemburger Wort, 16 February 2023: [Äthiopien - Einer der ältesten Kirchen der Welt droht die Spaltung](#) [in German] (Ethiopia - One of the oldest churches in the world threatens to split)

#### 4. Illegal arms trade with Ethiopia

Military and customs authorities in Italy, coordinated by the Genoa Public Prosecutor's Office, confiscated machinery for the fabrication of artillery material, i.e. shells, destined for sale to Ethiopia in the lack of the appropriate authorizations. Two containers landed at Genoa's customs areas for eventual shipment to Ethiopia included machinery with user manuals and instructions for the production of shells, despite the fact that the exporter had presented paperwork with no reference to the manufacturing of weapons.

- Secolo d'Italia, 23/1/2023: [Le guerre dimenticate. A Genova sequestrati macchinari per fabbricare armi destinati all'Etiopia](#).
- La Repubblica, 23/1/2023: [Genova, "quelle macchine servono a fabbricare armi": sequestri in porto](#)

Informally, we learned that the Italian customs seized more material than what is reported in these press articles. A contact in Eritrea also told us that Italians have recently been seen in the main Eritrean military camp at Sawa – not government officials, but rather people described as “the mafia”.

## 5. Tigray's internal political dynamism

The internal political environment of Tigray has been quite dynamic, featuring a variety of actors, as a result of the two years of dreadful war. Tigray's ruling TPLF party continues to dominate politics, according to opposition groups demanding more autonomy or independence from Ethiopia, as well as civil society organizations and academia. And these organisations accuse the TPLF leadership of failing to prevent the war that Ethiopia and Eritrea's governments had been planning since well before 2020. The governing party has established a committee to prepare a transitional government, despite the fact that the Tigray authorities earlier rejected the opposition's repeated requests for such a government. Allegations that the TPLF leadership is in control of the current process are mounting. In the confined political environment, the recent developments leave us with many questions.

- Asmerom Girmay, 23 February 2023: [Concerns Over General Tsadkan's Proposal - \(yabelemedia.com\)](https://yabelemedia.com)
- Tsadkan Gebretensae (Lieutenant General), February 22, 2023: [Towards the Formation of an Acceptable Interim Administration in Tigray: Comments and Suggestions – Tghat](#)
- Yabele Media, 19 February, 2023: [GSTS Releases its Proposals for Consideration in the Formation of the Interim Administration of Tigray](#)
- Hulluf Weldesilassie Kahsay, 18 February 2023: [Commentary: A Call for a meaningful participation of Irob and Kunama communities in Tigray Transitional Politics - Addis Standard](#)
- Addis Standard, 17 February, 2023: [Three Tigrayan opposition political parties invalidate committee to lead establishment of interim admin in Tigray - Addis Standard](#)
- Yabele Media, 02 February, 2023: [GSTS calls for inclusive interim administration, claims the transition could transform Tigray to peace & democracy.](#)
- Mehari Taddele Maru, December 9, 2022: [Op-ed: Tigray Interim Regional Administration: A case for government of national unity - Addis Standard](#)

## 6. Scientific publications

- Larkin HD. [Ceasefire Declared, but Ethiopian Health Systems Remain in Critical Condition After Civil War](#). JAMA. 2023;329(6):451–453. JAMA is a highly-cited medical journal published by the American Medical Association.
- Nyssen J., Tesfaalem Ghebreyohannes, Emnet Negash, Hailemariam Meaza, Biadgilgn Demissie, Annys S., Zbelo Tesfamariam, 2023. [Tigray's wartime landscape – a regional geographical study in the Tembien highlands](#). Mekelle University: Department of Geography and Environmental Studies & Ghent University: Department of Geography. Zenodo.
- Shishaye, H.A., Gebremicael, T.G., Meresa, H., Gebre, F.A. and Kidanu, S., 2023. [Assessing the impact of war on the water supply infrastructure in Tigray, Ethiopia](#).

## 7. Helping the people in Tigray

[Tigray Disaster Relief Fund \(TDRF\)](#) - Do you have a worthy project in Tigray that TDRF could contribute to? TDRF is funding projects from \$5,000-\$25,000 to support the people of Tigray. [Here is a video](#) that shows you how to navigate the application process.

The Green Tunaydbah Foundation project includes small-scale farming solutions for refugees near their shelters in the Tuneydbah camp in Sudan to enable them to produce food for their households and gain some income while creating employment opportunities and a sense of hope for other refugees. [Haben Tigray contributes to the project](#) and deserves to be supported.

“Mary’s Meals” [serves school meals in Tigray since 2017](#), and have [continued working](#) throughout the war. They have been [very vocal about the plight of the Tigray people](#). Mary’s Meals continues fundraising for Tigray – there was a broadcast on MM’s activities on the [radio in Croatia and Bosnia](#).

Klix, 29/1/2023: [Zaboravljeni rat u Etiopiji je najsmrtonosniji sukob u 21. stoljeću sa 600.000 mrtvih civila](#) [in Bosnian] (Ethiopia's forgotten war is the deadliest conflict of the 21st century, with 600,000 civilians dead.) Klix.ba is a major media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are dozens of comments under this article, and in general they say "it is very sad, but we can't help / what we can do / we can do nothing" or they criticize USA and their wars in Iraq etc... or "I can understand, we had war in Bosnia..." or someone even writes about the feudal Ethiopia under Haile Selassie. These comments show generally a lot of empathy, in contrast to sometimes irrelevant comments under articles of Western European newspapers. In the western Balkans, there is a proverb that **"the rich do not believe the poor"**.

The [EthioTrees project](#) activities did not stop throughout the war; the project leaders, both in Belgium and Tigray jointly continued to manage the community forest projects and to get the finance through, even at the darkest hours of blockade. There were several reports on Tigray TV and [Dimtsi Weyane TV, see the most recent one](#) (from 15:12 to 19:15).

In this last video, our project gives financial support to over 200 Agriculture and Rural Development staff in Dogu’a Tembien and to 20 Natural Resource Management staff pertaining to Inderta woreda – the districts where the project is active. These government employees have not received salaries for over two years. Interviewed staff including the Dogu’a Tembien district administrator mentioned that even now, months after the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, they have not received their salary yet; even if banks are now open this doesn't help government employees, as their salary was never sufficient to allow savings.

The problem is severe, and judging from the messages we and colleagues abroad get in our mailboxes, numerous professionals try to move out of Tigray. Earlier this week, Dr. Kibrom Gebreselassie, the [director of Ayder hospital raised the alarm](#):

“By the time salary and budget make it to Tigray, I am afraid not so many doctors will still be in their posts. The rate at which our hospital is losing its healthcare workers is alarming. The exodus is hemorrhaging the region. Healthcare is amongst the prime target.”

“Hitherto our main problem was lack of medications but from now onwards there will not be enough professional to utilize it. They have endured the brutal war and siege, waited patiently to see if conditions would get better but finally started to lose hope.”

“Now they are going away to wherever they can get a pay. The draconian plan is finally paying off.”

Four months ago, public health specialists had already forewarned for this scenario.

Some of our contacts suspect a deliberate move by the Abiy government: salaries are not paid and five flights per day out of Mekelle, a perfect plan to organise a **brain drain** out of Tigray.

- Hailay Gesesew, Fasika Amdelessie and Fisaha Tesfay, 13 October 2022: "[Tigray's Healthcare Workers Haven't Been Paid in Over a Year - and Bear the Brunt of the War](#)" (The Conversation)
- Tigray TV, 22 February 2023: [Suffering of IDPs from Irob](#)

## 8. Other opinion pieces

- Amal Stefanos: [Eritrea's 'diaspora tax' is funding violence and oppression](#) (AlJazeera)
- Delaney Hurley: [Crisis in Tigray](#). (Harvard Model Congress)
- Emnet Negash & Emiru Birhane: [War and siege inflicted damage on Tigray's ecosystem](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Hulluf Weldeasilassie Kahsay: [A call for a meaningful participation of Irob and Kunama communities in Tigray transitional politics](#) (Addis Standard)
- Jan Nyssen, webinar presentation, organised by "Every Casualty Counts" and the Centre for International Security at Royal Holloway, University of London: [Documenting the Civilian Victims of the Tigray War](#)
- Martin Plaut: [Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Europe's Stance on Ethiopia](#) (RUSI)
- Mehari Taddele Maru: [When you speak truth to power, clashes are inevitable](#)
- Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel: [What does Eritrea's ruler's statement in Nairobi tell us about justice and accountability for human rights violations in Tigray \(Tghat\)](#)

## 9. International media directly reporting from Tigray

- La Razon, 28/1/2023: [Alamata, Etiopía: las puertas al infierno de Tigray](#) [in Spanish] ([Alamata, Ethiopia: Tigray's gates to hell](#))
- Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 28 January 2023. [Die Gesichter des vergessenen Krieges](#) [in German] (The faces of a forgotten war) archived at <https://archive.ph/yKpxD>
- Die Welt, 8 February 2023: „[Lauft, wenn die Soldaten kommen. Lauft und lasst euch nicht finden!](#)“ [in German] (Run when the soldiers come. Run and don't let yourself be found!)
- Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 14 February 2023. 600 000 Tote – und nun wie weiter? [Unterwegs in Tigray, wo ein Krieg vorbei ist, der Frieden aber noch nicht begonnen hat](#) [in German] Archive: <https://archive.ph/4LmBg> (English translation: [600,000 dead – and now what next? On the road in Tigray, where a war is over, but peace has not yet begun](#))
- La Razon, 15/2/2023: "[Mi casa ya no estaba porque la bomba que mató a mis padres también la destruyó](#)" [in Spanish] (My house was gone because the bomb that killed my parents also destroyed it.)

## 10. Other media articles

- Addis Standard, 2 February 2023: [How a Tigrayan opposition leader who first exposed Eritrean troops' atrocities in Tigray languishes in Ethiopia prison after bail](#)
- **África 21 Digital, 3 February 2023.** [Sabe onde Fica Tigray?, a crónica de Fernando Paulouro \[in Portuguese\] \(Do you know where is Tigray?, the chronicle of Fernando Paulouro\)](#)
- Associated Press, 9/2/2023: [Eritrean leader dismisses as 'fantasy' alleged Tigray abuses](#)
- BBC The Comb, 10/2/2023: [When violence goes viral](#). (about political killings in Ethiopia)
- Club 44 podcast: [La problématique des conflits oubliés](#) [in French]. In this podcast, Charlotte Touati discusses the multiple and complex causes of the Tigray war, and Patrick Youssef explains how they handled the logistics for the peace negotiations.
- CNN Portugal, 29/1/2023: [A história de uma guerra "invisível" que fez mais de 600 mil mortos e na qual a fome foi usada como "arma" \[in Portuguese\] \(The story of an "invisible" war that claimed more than 600,000 lives and in which hunger was used as a "weapon"\)](#)
- Corriere della Sera, 27 January 2023: [Etiopia, la profezia di Jan Nyssen](#). ([archive](#)) (in English: ["Ethiopia, the prophecy of Jan Nyssen"](#). (The "prophecy" is in the end of the article: «They wanted - Nyssen said - to convert Tigray into a new Biafra. Depriving the civilian population of food is a war crime, but it seems that no one will be held accountable. » Unfortunately, this prediction will eventually come true.) The Corriere della Sera is Italy's most-read newspaper.
- Devex, 1 February 2023: [Tigray 'famine' was 'overt politicization,' says former WFP official](#)
- Domani (Italy), 9 February 2023: [Il conflitto più sanguinoso di cui non avete mai sentito parlare](#) [in Italian] ([The bloodiest conflict you've never heard of](#))
- DR (Danish public broadcaster), 5 February 2023: [Beskylder Facebook for at promovere krig](#) [in Danish] (Facebook is accused of promoting war)
- El País, 27 January 2023: [Etiopía, la guerra más mortal del siglo: 600.000 civiles muertos en dos años](#). ([archive](#)). El País also publishes this article in English: [Ethiopia's forgotten war is the deadliest of the 21st century, with around 600,000 civilian deaths](#) ([archive](#)). El País is the second most read newspaper in Spain. And: El País, 30/1/2023, [Editorial: El abandono de Etiopía](#) [in Spanish] ([The abandonment of Ethiopia](#))
- Focus on Africa, 25/1/2023: [Etiopia, 54.000 sfollati ad Abiy Addi senza cibo, medicinali e altre zone del Tigray senza aiuti](#)
- Géo, 30 January 2023: [En Éthiopie, la guerre oubliée du Tigré, conflit le plus meurtrier du XXIe siècle](#) [in French] (In Ethiopia, the forgotten Tigray War, the deadliest conflict of the twenty-first century)
- ICRC, 30 January 2023: Ethiopia: [New footage from Tigray shows widespread destruction of health facilities](#)
- Reuters, 1 February 2023: [Red Cross: Hospitals in Ethiopia's Tigray region struggle to deliver care](#)
- Le Monde, 6 February 2023 : [En Ethiopie, un palais pharaonique pour Abiy Ahmed, pris par la folie des grandeurs](#) [in French] (In Ethiopia, a pharaonic palace for Abiy Ahmed, taken by the madness of grandeur)
- Addis Fortune, 18 February 2023: [Affliction Amid Wheat Export Narrative](#) - The official narrative that Ethiopia has begun exporting wheat to neighbouring countries leads to strong inflation of bread prices in the country. Farmers are disgruntled for being compelled to sell their produce destined for exports for prices much lower than the local market.
- Daily Maverick, 17 February 2023: [Ethiopia peace agreement marred by gaps, say experts](#)

- The New Humanitarian, 16 February 2023: [Ethiopian minorities remain fearful despite peace deal](#)
- Yabele Media, 21 February 2023: [Trailer of the upcoming short documentary film 'Woyane'](#) by Jonny Stern.
- BBC, 15 February 2023: [Ethiopia war in Tigray: Eritrean soldiers accused of rape despite peace deal](#)
- Tigray TV, 27 February 2023: [Direct Talk with Nicolas Olivier, Head for ICRC Mekelle](#)

## **Digest 53.            Progressive insight into the number of starvation deaths (27 March 2023)**

We would have liked to join the “good news show” related to Tigray that is displayed by government media and some international news outlets. On 7 March, the Voice of America titled: [Children in Ethiopia's Tigray Return to School but Face Extended Trauma](#). In reality, a private kindergarten is featured in this article – public schools have not yet started after three years of interruption (see section 4)! Communications with the poorest segment of the population in Mekelle shows that people are disabused: “Nothing changes. Nobody gives the real information, not the government, not the media. People are murmuring a lot.”

In this Tigray Digest, we discuss the accountability for crimes against humanity in the Tigray War (section 1) and the ethnic cleansing and continued Amhara and Eritrean occupation of parts of Tigray (section 2).

Progressive insights, particularly about the number of famine fatalities, may imply that the IPC/FEWS categorization overestimates famine mortality. This, together with (limited) sample data from villages in Tigray, suggests that the total number of civilian deaths may be on the lower end of our previously projected range (section 3).

Section 5 addresses some public activities related to the humanitarian situation in Tigray, and as usual the last sections present an overview of new scientific publications, opinion pieces and other media articles.

### **1. Accountability for crimes against humanity in the Tigray War**

It may seem far away from Tigray: on March 17, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an [arrest order for Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) in connection with the invasion of Ukraine (deportation and transfer of population). It is a step forward from the previous situation where often crimes against humanity committed by heads of state remained unaccounted for.

Yet, in the present, there is also the Tigray War, which occurred concurrently with the Ukraine War. It took them a couple of years, but after his recent travel to Ethiopia, on March 20, US Secretary of State Blinken issued a press statement on [“War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity, and Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia”](#). Besides war crimes by all parties, Blinken stated that “members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, the Eritrean Defense Forces and Amhara forces ... committed crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence and persecution.” And, he accused the Amhara forces of “the crime against humanity of deportation, or forcible transfer, and ... ethnic cleansing through their treatment of Tigrayans in western Tigray.”



Of course, Blinken is not the ICC, but with such insights gaining momentum in the international community, may we hope for the ICC or a UN sanctioned special court to issue arrest warrants for Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara leaders who are all involved in crimes against humanity? According to the [Handbook on International Criminal Law](#), crimes against humanity are widespread or **systemic criminal acts** which are committed **by or on behalf of a state**, that grossly violate human rights. Crimes against humanity apply to **widespread practices** rather than individual acts.

The risk is however, according to a [recent report by Reuters](#), that the international community (including EU and US members of the UN Human Rights Council) may have done a deal with Addis not to extend the mandate of the ICHREE (International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia) beyond September 2023, in exchange for the Government of Ethiopia dropping the immediate curtailment resolution. Several HRC members (even Ireland!) talked about an ICHREE 'final' report in September 2023. Given the huge scale of the abuses to be investigated -the ICHREE mandate requires them to look at all parts of Ethiopia- this is tantamount to agreeing to curtail justice, accountability and transparency. All of the key global UN investigation panels are conducting their investigations remotely (Syria, Myanmar), and they all take many years to develop a picture in this kind of case. It is therefore only just that ICHREE should be allowed to continue in this way too, in order to complement whatever the Ethiopians wish to do domestically. Anything else would be a travesty.

#### Further reading:

- Reuters, 23 March 2023: [Ethiopia scraps bid to end UN-ordered Tigray abuses probe early – sources](#)
- Addis Insight, 21 March 2023: [Ethiopia's Government Blocks US State Department Report and Social Media, Leaving VPN as the Only Option](#)
- Panorama Nyheter, 1 March 2023: [Etioopia-kjennere om fredsavtale: Mange positive skritt, men mer må til for å skape varig fred](#) [in Norwegian] (Ethiopia connoisseurs on peace agreement: Many positive steps, but more is needed to create lasting peace)
- New York Times, 1 March 2023: [Slaughter on Eve of Ethiopian Peace Draws Accusations of War Crimes](#)
- Frankfurter Rundschau, 28 February 2023: [Äthiopien: Eine Kathedrale des Friedens in Tigray](#) [in German] (Journalist Johannes Dietrich revisited one of Tigray's most famous rock-hewn churches, after the war)
- Washington Post, 28 February 2023: [Hundreds massacred in Ethiopia even as peace deal was being reached](#)
- Reuters, 27 February 2023: [Ethiopia seeks to end U.N.-ordered probe into Tigray war abuses](#)
- Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and 60 other (mainly African) civil society and human rights organization, 28 February 2023: [Re: Threats to Terminate the Mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#)

- Frančiškov prijatelj 1/2023, p 27: Ni še miru [in Slovenian] (No peace yet) - <https://www.kapucini.si/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FP-1-2023.pdf>
- The Washington Post, 16 March 2023: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/03/16/blinden-ethiopia-visit-war-crimes/>
- Democracy Now!, 16 March 2023: [Will Peace Hold in Tigray? Blinken Visits Ethiopia Four Months After Truce Reached to End War](#)
- Every Casualty Counts, Amhara Association of America, 'Tigray War Project' at Ghent University, 21 March 2023: [Oral statement to the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#) as part of the UN Human Rights Council's 52nd Session.
- Foreign Policy, 9 March 2023: [U.S. Weighs Offering Economic Lifeline to Ethiopia Despite War Atrocities](#)
- Seifudein Adem and Abadir M. Ibrahim: [Ethiopia Is Not Ready for Transitional Justice](#) (Foreign Policy)
- Deutsche Welle, 10 March 2023: [Ethiopia seeks to block UN probe into Tigray massacres](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 7 March 2023: [Survivor recounts Tigray civilian massacres](#)

## 2. Ethnic cleansing and continued Amhara and Eritrean occupation of parts of Tigray

It took more than four months after the Cessation of Hostilities agreement for the Ethiopian parliament for 'simply' cancelling the TPLF 'terrorism' designation; first of all, it indicates that such labels are not an objective fact but depend on the circumstances of the day. Next, if such a move needs four months, then how much time would be needed for the retreat of Amhara troops from Western Tigray and restoration of the Tigrayan authority over the zone, arguably more sensitive politically and with the potential of triggering yet more violence?

As mentioned (section 1), the Amhara forces are guilty of the crime against humanity of deportation, or forcible transfer, and of ethnic cleansing through their treatment of Tigrayans in western Tigray. The Amhara government is actively organising the settlement of Amhara households in Western Tigray.

With regard of the Eritrean occupation of the northern borderlands, we have been in contact with some people in Alitena/Dawhan, and they said that Eritrean troops do occasionally enter Alitena town, but they do not stay there, but they are residing in the surrounding areas- Aiga, Kala-asa, Engal, Sebeya. We heard that more troops arrived at the end of February, when they again blocked the Adigrat-Dawhan road. The aid trucks sent to Dawhan were blocked. The forcible disappearance of people and obstruction of their movement continues. Crossing the Zegaru River to either side is not possible currently. The people say that Alitena was bombed 300 times. And Eritreans would also have attempted to bomb to the Gunda Gundo monastery, which is quite far away.

## Further reading:

- Tigray TV, 26 March 2023: [Illegal expansion of territories](#)
- <https://twitter.com/yusraadem1/status/1628451908863000577>
- Addis Standard, 20 March 2023: [Tigray asks federal govt to enforce withdrawal of Amhara forces after rally in occupied Southern Tigray](#)
- Bloomberg, 22 March 2023: [Ethiopia Takes Tigray Party Off Terror List After Cease-Fire](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 22 March 2023: [Ethiopia takes Tigray's TPLF party off terrorism list](#)

### 3. Progressive insight into the number of starvation deaths in Tigray

**Take-home message:** As our estimate of the civilian deaths in the Tigray war is regularly mentioned in the media, it seems important to share our evolving understanding and updated (lower) number of civilian deaths as a result of the Tigray war and blockade. We concluded that the IPC/FEWS categorization, on which our Tigray statistics are mainly based, overestimates hunger mortality. Along with developing information on the ground, this would point to a total number of civilian deaths ranging from 162,000 to 378,000. This is still a staggering figure, and the revised estimate does not acquit the Ethiopian government and its allies of the premeditated war crime of besieging and starving the population.

Several international media articles have given attention to our estimate of the civilian deaths in the Tigray war. We have always given a range of civilian deaths, roughly between 300k and 600k civilian victims, indeed in Tigray alone. Progressive insights, particularly related to the number of famine deaths, may indicate an overestimation of famine deaths in the IPC/FEWS classification. Jointly with emerging evidence on the ground, this would hint at a total number of civilian deaths that could rather be on the lower side of our earlier estimated range.

The IPC issued a famine warning in May 2021. They have detailed and structured data around how many people are affected by hunger in Tigray. Although not perfect, this gave us a starting point to calculate how many people might have died of starvation. IPC stopped providing data afterwards (due to inaccessibility to the region), but we had FEWS NET and WFP reports to work with as well, although they are less detailed.

Now, with better access to Tigray, there are some sample areas where civilian casualties were tallied. [Christian Putsch, for the German newspaper Die Welt](#), visited the *tabiya* (municipality) Tashi in the Saharti *woreda* (district), where the *tabiya* leader had tallied all civilian victims of the war: 350 dead, of which 50 in a massacre and the others by starvation and lack of medication. That is one out of 30 inhabitants.

In the Dogu'a Tembien district, we had our [own qualitative investigations](#) on the impact of the war on the social coherence and the natural environment in ten, generally small villages. The following civilian casualties were mentioned:

- Atsa: "There was no health service during the war. Many people have died due to lack of medicine and medical treatment."
- Addilal: "Six civilians were killed by soldiers and an airstrike;" "Several mothers died during their delivery. Very recently, three mothers died. In the last two years, about 20 community members passed away [due to war conditions]."
- Addi Qoylo: "Several civilians who escaped first and returned later to inspect their homes were killed by soldiers;" "Though most of the village community was displaced, the few people who stayed at home, were killed by the soldiers."
- Miheni: "Many civilians were killed by soldiers;" "The soldiers killed four people (from this village only) who were on their way to escape to the caves to save their lives;" "We were denied burying them. We buried the bodies after 7 days. One of the bodies was eaten by hyenas."
- Kolal: "An airstrike killed two people of the village, a man and a girl who were in the market in Togogwa and wounded many."
- Awulo: "The Eritrean soldiers killed 14 residents in the village;" "My son fell down from the cliff and died while escaping from the soldiers."
- Zeyi: "There was critical shortage of medicine in the last two years. Villagers died because there was no access to health facilities."
- Gumuara: "One day, Eritrean soldiers passed through this village. On their way they encountered a priest who was going to the church and they killed him."
- Aregen: "Some people have been killed;" "Fourteen farmers have died due to hunger;" "About eight mothers died while delivering due to shortage of medication."

Except for Aregen and Addilal, these are all small villages with 100-200 households. The stories are harrowing, everybody is bony skinny, but fortunately nothing in the interviews would point to a decimation of the population, i.e. 10% of the inhabitants losing their life.

From these reported numbers, the sample sites tend to indicate between 2% and 5% of civilian deaths per location. Of course, this is only a very small sample, and there are several caveats.

Tallying of death toll by local administrators or inhabitants may miss deaths due to hunger or inaccessibility to healthcare, because the cause may go unnoticed. The IPC approach takes such cases into account, in a statistical way.

Further, in several villages, the situation was and is still very bad and at the worst of the blockade, people have moved to towns or even to the Amhara region and Eritrea, hoping that they could better survive there. Deaths along the road or at the place of destination would not have been accounted for. For instance, in the Aregen *tabiya* in the Dogu'a Tembien district,

the inhabitants told us that 600 people (some 10% of the population) had left the *tabiya* in search for survival.

These reports, from Saharti and Dogu'a Tembien, concern better accessible areas; the situation is thought to be worse in the low-lying drier woredas, which often happened to be the most severe battlefields, such as Kola Tembien, Weri'i or Zana; and places such as Irob where no humanitarian access is allowed to date. We also have no information at all from the areas that are still under Amhara or Eritrean occupation.

Reversely, our own research in Dogu'a Tembien brought us to [Dabba Selama, one of the better endowed villages](#). There, the earlier food reserves of the farmers were not discovered and destroyed, and the local solidarity and age-old survival skills made that no starvation deaths were reported.

Overall, the samples show an estimate of 2% to 5% civilian deaths per location, which is well below our earlier estimate of 5% to 10% that heavily drew on death tolls associated with the different phases of the IPC classification.

An indicator that possibly too high death tolls are associated with the IPC classes is the [recent study by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine](#) in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF on excess deaths due to starvation in Somalia. In this study, they tried to estimate the overall excess deaths in 2022 compared to the death rate in 2016, before the drought. They had access to hundreds of mortality reports from hospitals and health centres, and they could also reference their results with historical famine data. [The researchers acknowledge](#) that the data is not 100% accurate, but it can be used as a 'what is known' scenario. Here, the death rates associated with the 2022 IPC data on Somalia would project at least 115,000 excess deaths (own calculations). The report mentions 43,000 excess deaths, only 38% of the projected IPC data.

Applying a similar correction on our earlier calculations for Tigray (starvation adjusted to 38% of the calculations) results in an estimate of 96k to 218k famine-related deaths by December 2022. Adding 30k-100k deaths due to lack of healthcare (hence, halving our earlier estimate) and 36k-60k deaths due to direct killings of civilians (massacres, bombardments, ...), ends up with **a total estimated civilian death rate in Tigray of 162k to 378k people.**

The available data and most of the narratives coming out of Tigray, make us believe that the situation is not totally as bad as what the IPC/WFP data (and hence our earlier calculations) suggested, luckily. Yet, 162,000 to 378,000 civilian victims in Tigray is a huge number and this new estimate does not at all absolve the Ethiopian government and its allies from the deliberate war crime of starving the population of an entire region through a near-medieval siege.

## Further reading:

- Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 6 March 2023: [600,000 dead – and now what? On the road in Tigray, where a war is over but peace has not yet begun](#)
- Le Monde, 3 March 2023: [En Ethiopie, les plaies à vif de la guerre au Tigré](#) [in French] ([In Ethiopia's Tigray region, the wounds of war remain raw](#))
- Tghat, 20 March 2023: [State of the Famine Response in Tigray](#)
- Jan Nyssen and Tim Vanden Bempt: [Has the Tigray blockade been lifted? The evidence shows it has not](#) (Martin Plaut's blog)
- Focus on Africa, 7 March 2023: [Etiopia, ancora blocchi sugli aiuti umanitari nel Tigray](#) [in Italian] (Ethiopia, more blockades on humanitarian aid in Tigray)
- Focus on Africa, 1 March 2023: [Etiopia, mancanza di aiuti adeguati agli sfollati interni \(IDP\) in Tigray](#) [in Italian] (Ethiopia, lack of adequate aid for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Tigray)
- Tghat, 11 March 2023: [Uneven Aid Delivery Divides Tigray between the Hungry and Starving](#)
- Addis Standard, 24 March 2023: [Locust swarms in three districts of Northwestern Tigray threaten farmers reeling from war impacts](#)

## 4. Tigray's educational, health, and other public services are still in shambles.

### Universities

Following extensive negotiations between Tigrayan universities and "Addis," the total of three months' pay (December, January, and February) has been deposited to the university, which has in most cases already transferred it to the staff's bank accounts.

To that end, representative teams from Tigray's four institutions, including the most senior emeriti, had to meet in Addis Abeba for three weeks.

Employees are hoping that their salary is now "on" for monthly payments. Yet, all contract workers (such as security guards) did not get their paychecks until today. Three universities (Raya, Aksum, and Adigrat) have additionally paid deans, directors, and (vice-)presidents their legal position allowances.

The teaching-learning process has yet to begin in any of Tigray's four higher education institutions.

### Primary and secondary schools

Teachers did not get their pay yet. Primary and secondary schools are closed.

Private elementary schools in cities have begun informal education (tutorial classes). Nevertheless, this is only available to individuals who can afford to pay for the tutorial lessons. Rather of retaining their children until formal schooling begins, those families that can afford to pay for tutorial courses send their children to private schools.

Tigray's children and youth have not attended school in three years.

### **Other sectors**

Health clinics have already opened. Nonetheless, health professionals are still working without pay.

Except for a few organizations (such as banks and universities), government employees have yet to receive their paychecks. The bankers were paid for a whole year.

It is also very difficult to withdraw salaries from bank accounts. Before two weeks, banks only allowed people to withdraw 2000 birr per day, which was later increased to 3000 birr per day. Then, for a few days, there was no money in the banks. Last Monday, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia in Mekelle granted a weekly withdrawal limit of 10,000 birr. Additionally, cash may be received illegally through brokers for a fee of 2.5% or 5%. The [Addis Standard has the details](#) on how the speculators operate.

### **No back payments**

While all public sector wage payments in Tigray have been suspended since June 2021, most sectors have yet to collect their paychecks, nearly five months after the cessation of hostilities. University employees did not get back pay, and bank employees received back pay for one year only.

Many of the employees who live in leased houses have not been paying their rents; they and their landlords have been waiting for back payments, which have not yet been made. Conflicts may now develop.

The lack of back payments reinforces our earlier analysis that this "law and order operation" was and continues to be a collective punishment on the Tigrayans!

### **Differential treatment among government employees**

If partial salary payments have been made to university and other federal government employees (including those of parastatals such as banks, telecom, and electricity agencies), teachers, health workers, and other regional government employees will not be paid until



regular block subsidy transfers from the Federal Ministry of Finance to the Tigray Region resume. If there was a will, there would be a way... and one might consider these delays as an additional means of pressure on the Tigray government.

## Fundraising

Colleagues of the University of Firenze organise a fundraising to support Mekelle University's researchers: <https://gofund.me/ae910f2f>

## 5. Tigray activities

- 3 April 2023: **webinar by the Tigrayan Diaspora Council in Europe** “promoting accountability and justice for all the crimes committed in Tigray”. Panelists: Getachew Reda, Laetitia Bader, Fisseha Tekle, William Davison, Michael Rubin, Millete Birhanemeskel. Moderator: Melat Habtu. See the details here: <https://twitter.com/DestaHHagos/status/1637828577365303296>
- On Thursday, March 9, a seminar was given by missionary **Ángel Olan** (aka **Abba Melaku**) **at the University of Lleida in Spain**: "[Tigray, the untold war](#)" (in Spanish).
- On Sunday, March 26, a seminar was given by **Jan Nyssen at Ghent University**: "[The geography of war crimes, humanitarian crisis and associated poor harvests in Tigray \(northern Ethiopia\)](#)" (in Dutch) – [slides in English](#).
- On 6-8 December 2023, the **Human Rights Research Network of Ghent University** (Belgium) organises an international conference on ‘The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 75: Rethinking and Constructing its Future Together’. This is an excellent opportunity to present papers/posters/videos on the human rights situation in Tigray and in the Horn. Deadline for submission of proposals is 16/04/23. <https://hrn.ugent.be/conf2023/>
- Watch out for similar conferences worldwide, in relation to the **75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

## 6. Scientific publications

Gebretsadkan Gebremedhin Gebretsadik, Mahlet Abraha, Tedros Bereket, Ferehiwot Hailemariam, Freweini Gebrearegay, Tigist Hagos, Mizan Assefa, Kidanemariam Berhe, Hadush Gebregziabher, Amaha Kahsay Adhanu, Mekonnen Haileselassie, Mulugeta Gebregziabher, Afework Mulugeta, 2023. [Prevalence and multi-level factors associated with acute malnutrition among children aged 6–59 months from war affected communities of Tigray, Northern Ethiopia, 2021: a cross-sectional study](#). Conflict and Health, 17(1).



Nyssen J., Hailemariam Meaza, Annys S., Emnet Negash, Biadgilgn Demissie, Zbelo Tesfamariam, Tesfaalem Ghebreyohannes, 2023. [How did the community surrounding the Horn's oldest monastery survive the Tigray War? - Dabba Selama revisited](#). World Peace Foundation (Tufts University, Somerville, MA, USA) – Reinventing Peace. The WPF editor introduces the work as: “The people of Tigray owe their survival to no-one but themselves. This report by a multi-author team from the universities of Mekelle and Ghent focuses on the small village of Dabba Selama. As Tigray emerges from its imposed isolation and silence, this is one tale among many. In this case it’s a story that shows the formidable resilience and survival skills of rural people, skills of enduring exceptional hardship that have lain unutilized for a generation, but have again been drawn upon.”

Rynn, S., 2023. [On Shifting Ground: An Appraisal of UK Engagement in Ethiopia](#) (RUSI)

## 7. Opinion pieces

- Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel: [Norge må ikke stå på feil side av historien i opprydningen etter Tigray-krigen](#) [in Norwegian] (Norway must not be on the wrong side of history in the clean-up after the Tigray war) (Panorama Nyheter)
- Kjetil Tronvoll & Mehari Taddele Maru: [Tigray's precarious transition: On the establishment of an Interim Regional Administration](#) (Democracy in Africa)
- Dereje T. Asefa and Dawit K. Zigta: [An Inclusive Interim Regional Administration with equal representation – a necessity for Tigray](#) (Martin Plaut's Blog)
- Emnet Negash, Getachew Gebrekiros Temare, Gebrehiwot Hadush Abera: [TPLF cannot be allowed to monopolize Tigray's interim government](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Mitiku Gabrehiwot: [Ethiopia's religious institutions were a catalyst for the Tigray war](#)

## 8. Other media articles

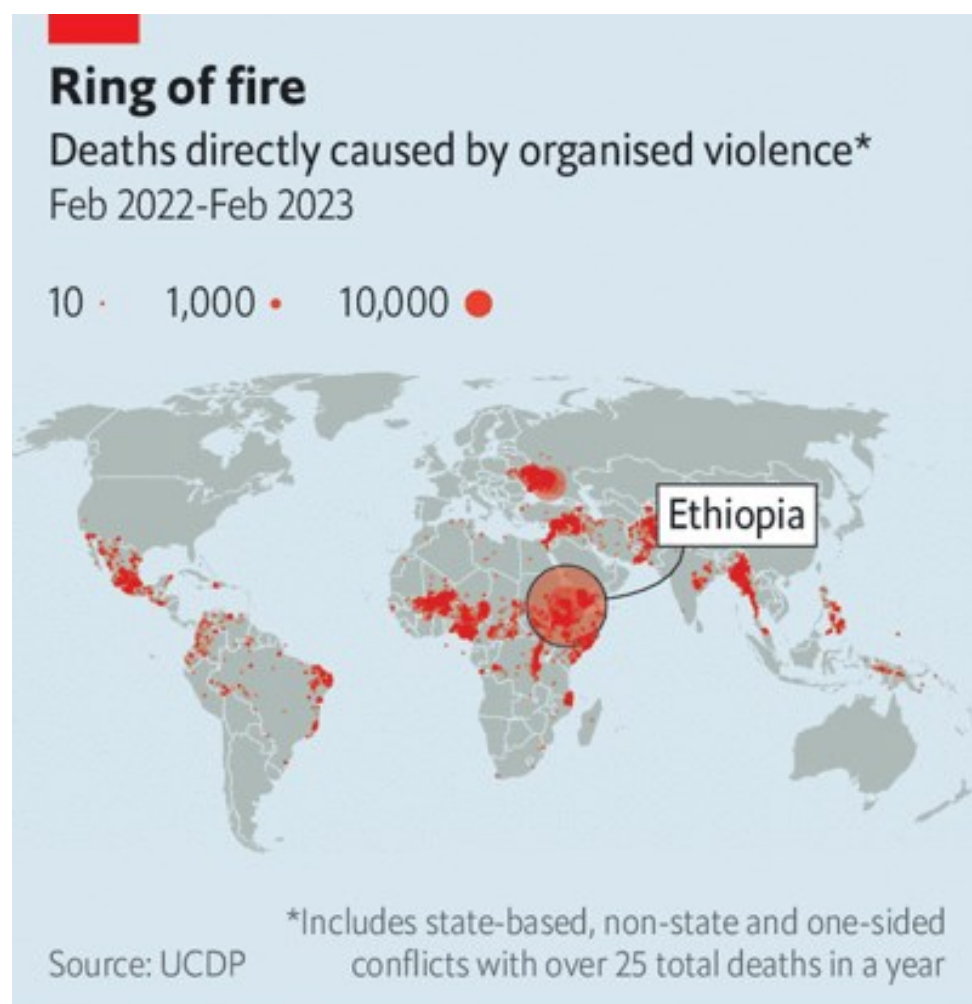
- Libération, 14 March 2023: “C’est donc ça, leur paix?” [in French] (“So this is what their peace looks like?”) 5 full pages about the Tigray war, including the cover: <https://twitter.com/libe/status/1635371083263012879> , PDF scans available upon request.
- Libération, 15 March 2023: [« L’Ethiopie n’est plus un pays pour moi » : la confiance brisée des Tigréens d’Addis-Abeba](#) [in French] (“Ethiopia is no longer a country for me”: the broken trust of the Tigrayans in Addis Ababa)
- EIN Presswire: NEW BOOK: Issayas Yrgaw Bahta: [The Tigrayan Electrician](#)
- Yabele Media, 21 March 2023: [Dr. Tewoldebirhan Gebre-egziabiher dies at 83](#)
- The Reporter Ethiopia, 4 March 2023: [War causes total destruction of Sheba leathers](#)
- AFP, 10 March 2023: [Charity Prioritizes Rebuilding Tigray Schools, Hospitals](#)
- Mehari Girmay: [Tigray's Forest Ecosystems After the War](#) (Yabele Media)

- BBC Sports, 24 March 2023: ['I didn't speak to them for 18 months' - Gudaf Tsegay on becoming world champion during Ethiopia's civil war](#)
- Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 9 March 2023: [Der Informationskrieger: wie ein junger Mann im Tigray-Krieg aus einem Videoverleih die grösste Nachrichtendrehscheibe der Region machte](#) [in German] (The Information Warrior: How a Young Man Turned Video Rental into the Region's Largest News Hub in the Tigray War)
- BBC Focus on Africa, 23 March 2023: [New interim leader of Tigray appointed](#) (with colleague Kjetil Tronvoll (Oslo New University College), from 13:30 to 20:00 minutes into the programme)
- Addis Standard, 25 March 2023: [Tigray interim president sets out regional territorial integrity, justice, IDPs as priorities as interim administration assume power](#)
- Addis Standard, 22 March 2023: [Incoming Tigray interim leader pledges to address grievances of disabled Tigrayan soldiers following protest rally in Mekelle](#)
- Ethiopia Insight, 1 March 2023: [Internal tensions could destabilize Tigray's transition](#)
- Addis Standard, 3 March 2023: [Journalists at TPLF owned Dimtsi Woyane media in Tigray resign en masse protesting lack of editorial freedom, bad leadership](#)
- Ethiopia Insight, 28 February 2023: [A rift in Ethiopia's Orthodox Church has been healed, but tensions remain](#)
- Ethiopia Insight, 8 March 2023: [Uncertainty in the Horn as a wary Eritrea seeks new alliances](#)
- Ethiopia Insight, 11 March 2023: [Minority rights dilemma exemplifies Ethiopia's brutal identity crisis](#)

## Digest 54. **Land of graves, land of hunger<sup>3</sup> (20 May 2023)**

In the first section of this 54<sup>th</sup> Tigray Digest, we borrow the wordings “land of graves, land of hunger” from the German magazine Der Spiegel. The article shows that we need to keep sharing information about the massacres, sexual violence, starvation, and the lack of accountability in the Tigray war. This is also highlighted by the below map published by The Economist, which recently titled: “the world’s deadliest war last year wasn’t in Ukraine”.

Further, we address the current situation in Tigray (section 2) and the continued targeting of Tigrayans in Ethiopia (section 3). War has also broken out in Sudan (section 4), which affects the local population, as well as the many refugees in that country (including Eritreans and Tigrayans). We give some hints for further reading about the Sudan war. Unfortunately, our earlier fears are confirmed that the EU Council has decided to patronize the genocidal Ethiopian government (section 5). We conclude this digest with an overview of newly published books and scientific publications related to the Tigray war (section 6), as well as other opinion pieces and media articles (section 7).



The Economist

<sup>3</sup> Section title borrowed from Der Spiegel, 31 March 2023.

## 1. Tigray, “land of graves, land of hunger”

Article header in Der Spiegel: Ethiopia after the Civil War - Land of Graves, Land of Hunger - The Civil War in Tigray is over – for now. It is estimated that up to 380,000 civilians have died and tens of thousands of women have been raped. Can peace hold after all the crimes?

(Der Spiegel, 31 March 2023. [Ethiopia After the Civil War - A Fragile Peace in the Wake of Unspeakable Horrors](#) -in German: [Äthiopien nach dem Bürgerkrieg - Land der Gräber, Land des Hungers](#).)

Additionally, after evidence of theft surfaced, as a collective punishment the **humanitarian aid to Tigray has been totally stopped** by WFP and USAID – a drastic measure, which was also implemented in the [Amhara region after the violence there](#), that will lead to hundreds of additional deaths. The results are directly tangible, including extreme hunger in the IDP camps on the outskirts of Mekelle.

### Read and listen:

- Duke Burbridge, 8 May 2023: [The suspension of food aid to Tigray expected to kill innocent civilians](#) (Tghat)
- Teklehaymanot Weldemichel, 12 May 2023: [USAID, WFP aid suspension in Tigray will hinder peace process](#) (Devex)
- Deutschlandfunk, 4 May 2023: [Krisendiplomatie als politisches Speeddating: Scholz in Äthiopien und Kenia](#) [radio broadcast in German]. At 00:45 into the broadcast, Jens Plötner, the German PM Scholz' foreign policy advisor, states that there were 600,000 - 800,000 casualties in the Tigray war.
- The Economist, 17 April: [The world's deadliest war last year wasn't in Ukraine](#) (the map at the top of this Tigray Digest was published in this article of The Economist)
- Olhares do Mundo (Brazil), 28 April 2023. [Ethiopian government has encouraged ethnic nationalism to eradicate Tigrayans, says historian Charlotte Touatti](#)
- SRF (Switzerland), 27 March 2023: [Der Tigray-Krieg hinterlässt tiefe Wunden, die kaum verheilen](#) [in German] (The Tigray war leaves deep wounds that are barely healing). SRF journalist Samuel Burri also published a photographic report in a Twitter thread: [https://twitter.com/sam\\_btw/status/1640333202626584582](https://twitter.com/sam_btw/status/1640333202626584582)
- The New Humanitarian, 29 March 2023: [Ethiopia's new struggle over war crimes accountability](#). The atrocities reported so far are only ‘the tip of the iceberg’.
- Addis Standard, 12 April 2023: [At least 47,000 fresh IDPs arrive at Endabaguna, Shire from ten woredas of disputed Western Tigray](#)
- Associated Press, 13 April 2023. [UN, others cite new displacement from Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Context, 20 March 2023: [In Ethiopia's Tigray region, unpaid workers count the cost of war](#)

And also:

On 26 April, the CSIS Humanitarian Agenda and Norwegian Refugee Council hosted a two-day conference on [“Sustaining Access: Humanitarian Principles, Practice, and Policy for Today's Challenges”](#). One of the conclusions was that the **tragedy in Tigray could become the norm** in future conflicts. Lise Grande from the U.S. Institute of Peace: “You've got a major global power that says

'neutrality' is in fact 'non-interference'. If you're not worried about that, start to panic. The humanitarian stakes are very high as we all know, in less than two years 500,000 people are estimated to have died in the conflict in Tigray. Organizations which track this estimate that **300,000 of the 500,000 people who died, died because they didn't have us, they didn't have humanitarian assistance**. Despite the best efforts of the teams on the ground, none of the existing humanitarian diplomatic or economic tools (...) resulted in predictable access. So of course the tragedy in Tigray is going to become the norm unless we figure out how to adapt our engagement strategies to fit the new realities in a very different balance of global power.” (34:00 minutes into [the YouTube recording](#)).

## 2. Current situation in Tigray

The Tigray budget releases have not resumed through the normal system, everything needs to be negotiated, piece by piece. We are also aware of the huge tensions within the Tigrayan leadership which doesn't ease up things.

Schools have started in Tigray after almost three years (!) of interruption, but there are huge needs to refurbish buildings, resupply furniture and teaching materials. Also, due to hunger and disorganisation, many teachers and students did not yet show up in schools. Importantly, [552 schools in Tigray are inaccessible](#) due the presence of Amhara and Eritrean forces.

### Further reading:

- The Africa Report, 24 April: [Ethiopia: Who's who in Getachew Reda's cabinet](#)
- Fitsum Gebre, Dawit K. Zigta and Dereje T Asefa: [Can Getachew Reda be instrumental in transforming the fortunes of Tigray?](#) (Martin Plaut's blog)

## 3. Continued targeting of Tigrayans in Ethiopia

There has been a Cessation of Hostilities between the TPLF and the Ethiopian Government, but specialists have hinted that there is never a clear line between war and post-conflict; rather, it must be regarded as a continuum. Colombia and Iraq and are both prime examples.

With regard to Ethiopia, and as far as we are aware, no mass arrests of Tigrayans have occurred since the Pretoria and Nairobi Agreements. Since then, many Tigrayans have been liberated from unlawful prison camps. However, thousands of Tigrayan soldiers (regular army personnel) have been incarcerated in camps since 2020 primarily on the basis of their ethnicity; some dozens have been released but most are still in the concentration camps.

For the Ethiopian government, and for the public opinion in Addis Abeba, anybody with a Tigrayan name is suspicious and could be targeted for abuse; this is the result of an aggressive hate campaign

that began even before the outbreak of the Tigray War. Those who have stood up to the Ethiopian government, for example, by sharing information on the numerous war crimes in which it has been implicated, may be particularly targeted by secret services and paramilitary groups.

Also, Tigrayans who are no longer in jail suffer severely from the evil that occurred in prior years. Tigrayans in Addis Ababa were forced to close their shops and businesses well before the peace deal, did not have access to their bank accounts for two years, were evicted from their residences, and so on. Such a drastic campaign to weaken one ethnic group politically, economically and socially cannot heal in a few months: the Tigrayans in Addis Ababa are still without a job, without money, bank accounts often blocked, etc. When trying to renew their business license, requesting a passport or other administrative documents, Tigrayans often have to pay a substantial "facilitation fee" under the table, otherwise their files will not be processed. Birth certificates and identity cards issued by the regional government of Tigray after September 2020 are systematically discarded. The poorest half among the Tigrayans in Addis will simply not have any administrative issues resolved.

In summary, we are unaware of any additional systematic arrests or discriminatory measures after the Pretoria Agreement. However, many previously enacted discriminatory restrictions remain in effect and *de facto* Tigrayans are outcasted in Addis Ababa and Ethiopia outside Tigray.

#### **4. Sudan war**

War has broken out in Sudan, which afflicts the local population, as well as the many refugees in that country (including Eritreans and Tigrayans). When it started, this war received much more media attention than the Tigray war, presumably because many international media are present in Khartoum, and the evacuation of foreign nationals.

The UN Human Rights Council met in [special session on Sudan](#). All the African states that are currently part of the Council either abstained or voted against a resolution giving the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Sudan authority to report on violations in the current war. Ethiopia argued for "African solutions for African problems" and held up the Pretoria Agreement (two years after the start of the Tigray war!) as an example, saying that the session was "untimely". Presumably Sudanese should also have to wait for a million to die, like in Ethiopia.

Those who wish to follow the situation in Sudan, may usefully [subscribe to the EEPA newsletters](#) (EEPA stands for [Europe External Program with Africa](#)).

#### **Background reading:**

- Alex De Waal: [Sudan's Descent Into Chaos](#) (Foreign Affairs)
- Adam Tooze: [The Sudan crisis and the Sahel gold rush](#) (Chartbook)
- The Guardian, 15 May 2023: [‘I saw many bodies’: having escaped one conflict, Tigray refugees face new terrors](#). Living in UN camps in a rapidly collapsing Sudan, refugees from Ethiopia are

being kidnapped, taken across the Sahara, and tortured for ransom – in a brutal, multimillion-dollar industry

- Alex De Waal: [The Revolution No One Wanted](#) (London Review of Books)
- Alex De Waal: [The conflict in Sudan threatens to devolve into a regional maelstrom](#) (Responsible Statecraft)

## 5. EU Council shields the Ethiopian government

The EU Council has decided to normalize relations with Ethiopia. In light of the reality in Tigray which is still a *de facto* blockade with Eritrean and Amhara forces still occupying large swathes of Tigray where they are still actively displacing Tigrayans, this decision paints an exaggerated progress aimed to rationalize the normalizations of relations the EU wants (Tghat, 25 April 2023: [About the EU Council Conclusions for Ethiopia](#))

The Ethiopian government continues to discriminate against Tigrayans, withholds supplies, or covers up organized starvation and other war crimes while the western diplomatic community is busy praising it for enforcing "justice." The Amhara Region has [ethnically cleansed the Tigrayans in Western Tigray](#), and the Abiy regime permits them to bring in Amhara settlers there. No number of diplomatic visits to Mekelle will be able to conceal this collaboration with a genocidal regime. As if the current situation in Sudan serves as a beautiful testimonial for the glowing benefits of cuddling up to war criminals and believing that they would change for the better.

## 6. Newly published books and scientific publications

- Ramos, M. J., Neto, P. F., Daniele, G., (Eds.), 2022. [Border crossings in and out of Europe](#). CEI-Iscte, Lisboa. Includes an illustrated testimony of an Ethiopian migrant in Portugal, by Manuel João Ramos.
- Hidat Tikue, Birhan Gebrekirstos, Mulu Mesfin, 2023. [Tearing the body, breaking the spirit: women and girls' rape stories from the Tigray genocidal war](#).
- Aster Gebrekirstos & Emiru Birhane, 2023. [The war on Tigray wiped out decades of environmental progress: how to start again](#). The Conversation.
- Haftom Gebremedhn & Teweldemedhn Gebretinsae, 2023. [Tigray War Put Honey Bees in Peril](#). *Bee World* (2023): 1-5
- Nyssen, J., 2023. [The historical and language maps of Western Tigray speak for themselves, there is no need to "doctor" them – A rebuttal to Professors Shiferaw Bekele and Dagnachew Assefa \(Addis Ababa University\)](#)

## 7. Other opinion pieces and media articles

- Business Insider, 18 April 2023: [A professor was murdered after a Facebook post branded him a traitor. Was Facebook complicit in his death? Sign the petition! Mark Zuckerberg: Stop Facebook Fueling Violence and Death in Ethiopia](#)
- Filsan Abdi: [Ethiopia needs an all-inclusive peace process led by women](#) (AlJazeera)

- De Morgen, 13 April: [‘Na Tigray staat er een nieuwe burgeroorlog op uitbreken, als die niet al gaande is’: in Ethiopië dreigt humanitaire catastrofe](#) [in Dutch]
- The Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion has published two reports on migrant communities that strongly highlight how the Eritrean government extracts funds and intimidates the Eritrean diaspora – Martin Plaut [republishes the reports and highlights](#) some relevant sections
- Alex de Waal, Jan Nyssen, Gebrekirstos Gebreselassie, Boud Roukema and Rundassa Eshete: [Plagiarism in Abiy Ahmed’s PhD Thesis: How will Addis Ababa University handle this?](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Samuel Zewdie: [Eritrea’s government should not be allowed to harm peace in Ethiopia](#) (AlJazeera)
- Martin Plaut: [Is confusion PM Abiy’s latest strategy?](#)
- AlJazeera, 10 April 2023: [Aid group says two workers shot dead in Ethiopia’s Amhara region](#)



## **Digest 55. Starvation in Tigray and the WFP-Ethiopia food aid diversion scandal (9 June 2023)**

This 55<sup>th</sup> Tigray Digest is almost entirely devoted to the aid diversion scandal in Ethiopia. The consequences are dire for the starving people in Tigray and potentially also elsewhere in Ethiopia. At the end of this Digest, there are also some links to popular scientific and media articles.

### **1. Starvation in Tigray and the WFP-Ethiopia food aid diversion scandal**

Over the last three months, more than 270 people have died of hunger just in the northwestern zone of Tigray. The deaths were reported from Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) centers and from villages in the zone. Earlier on, we had reported on the dire hunger situation in the IDP camps in Mekelle. Things are worse than before: people are dying daily from starvation. Additionally, thousands of newly arrived IDPs from Western Tigray are also in need of immediate food support.

According to the Tigray Regional Health Bureau, between March and April, there was an increase of 28% in the number of young children under five dying from acute malnutrition. The cessation of help to Tigray is mostly to blame for this. In a long Twitter thread, Spanish journalist [Ximena Borrazas further reports on the ongoing starvation](#) in Tigray.

More details are now emerging on the reasons for food aid suspension by WFP and USAID (by far the largest food aid donor to Ethiopia), and it has to do with large-scale theft that is occurring since several years, but now escalated.

After an internal inquiry into food aid diversion was started, The New Humanitarian announced that the director and deputy of the WFP in Ethiopia resigned on June 2 – an information that WFP denied. The investigation's findings are yet to be published.

The investigation looked into possible food aid diversion, in which food allegedly intended for Tigray was instead sold on the open market – volumes of aid grain were traced at various parts in Ethiopia. Due to this, help to Tigray has been halted until the investigation is finished.

Last year, the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) commissioner Mitiku Kassa had already been sidelined for corruption regarding aid distribution – which did not stop theft to go on.

In April, IDPs in the Aba'ala zone of the Afar region already launched protests over the role that government officials played in the misappropriation of relief funds. At that occasion, Melese Awoke, senior communication officer at WFP Ethiopia stated that aid corruption is common.

Over the next weeks, more WFP resignations are anticipated since it's believed that food supplies were also diverted in the Somali region that is already suffering from drought.

Now, internal sources state that the food aid corruption scandal also involves the Ethiopian army (ENDF) and eight regional governments, as well as high-ranking figures from WFP and USAID. It has been running for years (before the war) but it escalated during the war. The grain is diverted to traders and large flour factories. The corruption would even be linked up to suspicions of inflation of the population statistics of Ethiopia from 100M to 120M, which allowed inflating the food aid volumes, hence possibilities for diverting it.

The food aid meant for the starving Tigrayans that has been substantially stolen and taken to locations like Gambela and even Kenya is the talk of the town in Mekelle. The Ethiopian prime minister recently made the extremely proud declaration that his country was now exporting grain.

Luckily for the starving people in other regions of Ethiopia, outside Tigray, the food aid has not been interrupted there. But we remain puzzled why the drastic measures are taken for Tigray only, in view of the country-wide organised food aid theft. Therefore, it is vital to loosen the constraints on food aid to Tigray while being completely transparent about the theft strategies that have been uncovered and the primary offenders.

## Sources

- Addis Standard, 29 May 2023: [Hunger related death rises in Tigray amidst ongoing investigation into food aid diversion, persistent aid suspension](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 5 June 2023: [WFP leadership in Ethiopia resigns amid aid diversion probe](#)
- Addis Standard, 13 July 2022: [Fed. police detain Ethiopia disaster risk management chief on suspicion of corruption](#)
- The Reporter, 22 April 2023: [“Aid corruption” angers beneficiaries in Afar](#)
- Addis Standard, 5 June 2023: [Under five children dying of acute malnutrition in Tigray sharply increasing amid dire humanitarian crisis](#)
- Duke Burbridge, 8 May 2023: [The suspension of food aid to Tigray expected to kill innocent civilians \(Tghat\)](#)
- The Washington Post, 8 June 2023: [USAID cuts food aid supporting millions of Ethiopians amid charges of massive government theft](#)
- Addis Standard, 8 June 2023: [Donor-funded food diversion in Ethiopia ‘coordinated, criminal scheme’; covers seven regions, involves fed gov’t, regional entities](#)
- Twitter: [Mukesh Kapila](#), [Lauren Blanchard](#)
- Martin Plaut: [Ethiopia: Behind the World Food Programme apparent resignations](#)
- Teklehaymanot Weldemichel, 12 May 2023: [USAID, WFP aid suspension in Tigray will hinder peace process](#) (Devex)
- Further Africa, 15 February 2023: [Ethiopia fulfils its vision of becoming a wheat export nation – Abiy Ahmed](#)
- Private information from Tigray and from Addis Ababa

## 2. (Popular) scientific articles

- Mukesh Kapila: [Peace in Sudan depends on justice for the Darfur genocide](#) (The Conversation)
- Nyssen, J., Hailemariam Meaza, Annys, S., Emnet Negash, Biadgilgn Demissie, Zbelo Tesfamariam, Tesfaalem Ghebreyohannes: [Ethiopia: how a lucky village in Tigray survived the devastating war](#). (The Conversation) – in Italian: [Etiopia: come un fortunato villaggio del Tigray è sopravvissuto alla devastante guerra](#)
- Goitom Gebreluel, 2023. "[Ideology, grand strategy and the rise and decline of Ethiopia's regional status](#)." *International Affairs* 99.3 (2023): 1127-1147.
- Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic at Yale Law School, 2023. [‘All of Us Are in Constant Hunger’: Ethiopia’s Responsibility for Starvation in Tigray](#).

## 3. Other media articles

- The Guardian, 31 May: [Ethiopian Airlines faces legal case over claims it blocks Tigrayans from travel](#).
- Human Rights Watch, 1 June: [Ethiopia: Ethnic Cleansing Persists Under Tigray Truce](#) - Rights Abusers in Western Tigray Zone Face No Accountability for Torture, Forced Expulsions
- Addis Standard, 6 June: [Ethiopia says HRW report on Ethnic cleansing in western Tigray ‘distorted and misleading’, seeks to achieve ‘political agenda’](#)
- [Ken Roth](#): [If the Ethiopian government doesn't want people to believe HRW's latest report on its allies' ongoing ethnic cleansing in western Tigray, why doesn't it allow independent journalists and human rights monitors in to see?](#)
- Addis Standard, 24 May: [Tigray health bureau expresses concern over whereabouts of at least 13,000 HIV patients in post-war](#)
- Addis Standard, 20 May: [Interim president accuses Eritrean forces of blocking AU monitoring mission in Tigray](#)
- Peace Research Institute Oslo, 7 June: [New figures show conflict-related deaths at 28-year high, largely due to Ethiopia and Ukraine wars](#)

## Digest 56. **Appeal to extend the mandate of ICHREE (29 June 2023)**

These are the latest news and especially action points with regard to the humanitarian situation in Tigray.

### **1. Food aid suspension by WFP and famine in Tigray**

The food aid is still suspended by WFP and USAID and famine further develops in Tigray, now that we are reaching the lean season. Except that fighting has stopped, people in Tigray do not see much positive changes since the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. After two war years without salaries, many people continue to work without wages... And USAID and WFP stopped all food aid, thereby punishing the victims of the aid theft, rather than the culprits! After all these months, no comprehensive report was published and no corrective measures taken. And people are let to starve. Many media and opinion pieces now address the issue.

- Addis Standard, 29 June 2023: [Tragedy strikes Abiy Addi IDP Camp as hunger claims hundreds of lives in Tigray, thousands remain in peril](#)
- The Guardian, 29 June 2023: [‘We blame government and aid agencies’: food relief thefts in Ethiopia leave those in need with nothing](#)
- Tghat, 7 June 2023: [Photojournalist Ximena Borrazás on harrowing stories of rape and starvation in Tigray](#) (video).
- Davide Tommasin, 15 June 2023: [Etiopia, lo scandalo del dirottamento e blocco alimentare umanitario per milioni di persone in Tigray](#) (in Italian) (Ethiopia, the scandal of the hijacking and humanitarian food blockade for millions of people in Tigray)
- Africa News, 23 June 2023: [Ethiopia: Famine threatens Tigray after food aid suspension](#)
- Duke Burbridge: [Aid suspension threatens millions of Ethiopian lives](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Halefay, 23 June 2023: [Abune Tesfaselassie Medihin, a Bishop of Adigrat Eparchy wrote a plea to USAID and WFP to avert the decision which brings death of the poor and to the needy](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 22 June 2023: [USAID/WFP food aid freeze leads to suffering and deaths in Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 19 June 2023: [WFP hopes to resume some Ethiopia food aid distribution by July](#)
- AciAfrica, 25 June 2023: [“Death sentence upon those trying to survive”: Bishop on Food Aid Suspension in Ethiopia](#)
- AFP, 22 June 2023. [Ethiopie: le Tigré crie famine après la suspension de l'aide alimentaire](#) [in French]. ([Hunger devastates Ethiopia's Tigray as food aid halted](#)af)
- Le Monde, 16 June 2023. [En Ethiopie, 186 personnes soupçonnées de détournements de l'aide alimentaire destinée au Tigré](#) [in French] (In Ethiopia, 186 people suspected of diversion of food aid destined for Tigray)
- Associated Press, 21 June 2023: [Once starved by war, millions of Ethiopians go hungry again as US, UN pause aid after massive theft](#)
- News Central TV (Nigeria), 20 June 2023: [Ethiopia Conflict: “All Stakeholders Are Complicit In The Allegations Of Humanitarian Aid Diversion”](#)

- El Pais, 10 June 2023: [La artillería silenciosa del hambre en Tigray](#) [in Spanish] (the silent artillery of famine in Tigray – photo report).
- Associated Press, 27 June 2023: [Hunger kills hundreds after US and UN pause food aid to Ethiopia's Tigray region, officials say](#)
- Addis Standard, 14 June 2023: [Newborn mortality rising in Tigray's Seharti Samre district, officials urge nutritional food supplies](#)
- Tigray Television, 14 June 2023: [Farmers in Eastern Tigray Suffer from Lack of Agricultural Inputs](#)

## 2. New book

Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay, Sally Keeble, 2023. In Plain Sight: Sexual violence in the Tigray conflict. [Kindle and Paperback versions for sale on Amazon.](#)

## 3. Appeal to extend the mandate of the International Commission on Human Rights and Enquiry into Ethiopia (ICHREE)

Campaign by Legacy Tigray to send messages to the UN HRC member missions to lobby for the extension of ICHREE's mandate after September. <https://twitter.com/LegacyTigray/status/1673374036296974353>

## 4. AGU23 session: Advances in Earth Observation and Monitoring Impact of Armed Conflict on Ecosystem Services

The American Geophysical Union (AGU) fall meeting is one of the largest international conference of earth scientists. This year, our friends Liya Weldegebriel (Stanford), Emnet Negash (UGent) and colleagues from the Conflict and Environment Observatory as well as the University of California Berkeley organise a session on "Advances in Earth Observation and Monitoring Impact of Armed Conflict on Ecosystem Services". To say it in layman's words: the use of satellite imagery to capture the impact of wars on the environment. Read it here: <https://agu.confex.com/agu/fm23/prelim.cgi/Session/188200> (and possibly submit your abstract)

## 5. Full recording of "The Effects of War on Higher Education in Ethiopia" round table, hosted by Prof. Michael Gervers (University of Toronto)

From the [University of Toronto website](#):

*On 22 November 2022 the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies (HCS) at the University of Toronto Scarborough sponsored a round table webinar entitled "The Effects of War on Higher Education in Ethiopia." The objective of this round table, and now the video recording thereof, is to*

*inform the University of Toronto community, Canadians, and scholars and the public elsewhere, of the destruction of Ethiopia's contemporary system of higher education and its ancient cultural heritage. The devastation has come about as a consequence of the two-year-old war perpetrated by the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments against the nearly 6-million inhabitants of the Tigray region in the country's north. Following the start of the engagement on 4 November 2020, the Federal government closed Tigray's four universities, interrupted all levels of education across the region, and cut the entire population off from banking and communication services. It also disconnected the electrical supply, destroyed the agricultural and industrial sectors, and prevented food provided by humanitarian agencies from entering the region. The universities have been ransacked and their removeable infrastructure looted. Civilians everywhere have been, and continue to be targeted, especially in extensive parts of Tigray currently occupied by the Eritrean army. There have been horrendous massacres and, on 13 September 2022, the Business Campus of Mekelle University was bombed in a government-sponsored drone attack intended further to intimidate simultaneously both the educational and civilian sectors. Meanwhile, the many Ethiopian universities outside Tigray, including Addis Ababa University (founded in the 1950s by Canadian Jesuits) contributed over USD \$5 million towards the government's war effort against Tigray.*

*The Ethiopian Minister of Education, H.E. Professor Berhanu Nega, and the president of Addis Ababa University, Professor Tassew Woldehanna were invited to participate in the round table, but did not respond to the invitation. Professor Menegesha Ayene, president of Wollo University, volunteered to participate, but did not attend.*

Full recording is also directly available on YouTube, with subtitles.

Part I: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLZLXTM6hvk> (Nathalie Rothman, Patrick Wight, Alexie Tcheuyap, Richard Reid, Kindeya Gebrehiwot, Jan Nyssen, Goitom Tegegn)

Part II: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFmaorMLBws&t=18s> (Hagos Abraham, Wolbert Smidt, Goitom Admasu, Patrick Wight)

## **6. Other media and opinion pieces**

- Bisrat AFT, Mekelle University, College of Health Sciences: Two years after the Togogwa airstrike – eyewitness photo report; June 22, 2021 ([Twitter thread](#))
- Ewelina Ochab: [Tigrayans Continue To Be Targeted In Ethiopia Despite The Ceasefire](#) (Forbes)
- Kjetil Tronvoll & Mehari Tadelle Maru: [A hobbled transition: The intractable task of Tigray Interim Administration](#) (Addis Standard)
- Luminos Fund & Tigray Education Bureau: [Study of the learning loss and psychosocial well-being of students, teachers and parents in the Tigray War](#)
- Addis Standard, 13 June 2023: [Ethiopia's wars devour more than \\$28 b in economic loss, damages; \\$20 b needed for reconstruction](#)
- Addis Standard, 13 June 2023: [Election board declines new request for TPLF as regional party](#)
- Al Jazeera, 13 June 2023: [Fate of jailed fighters still unknown months after Ethiopia truce](#)

## Digest 57.        **200% increase in ‘severe acute malnutrition’ in Tigray, UN says (26 July 2023)**

In this Tigray Digest, we come with the latest news regarding the hunger crisis, as the WFP food aid has still not resumed (section 1). Further we address the accountability for war crimes (section 2), and the occupation of Western Tigray that has not been lifted despite the CoHA (section 3). We announce some upcoming conferences where the Tigray crisis will or could usefully be discussed (section 4); and we congratulate all colleagues who published new papers on the humanitarian situation in Tigray in high-impact scientific journals (section 5). The last section provides links to some other recommended publications.



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### **1. Hunger and starvation in Tigray**

“The World” is a broadly listened public radio magazine in the US and Canada. Early July, they have interviewed [Cameron Hudson](#), senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, on the interruption of WFP food assistance and the food crisis in Tigray. Please take five minutes to listen to Cameron Hudson’s very sharp analysis: The World, 5 July 2023. [200% increase in ‘severe acute malnutrition’ in Tigray, UN says](#)

[‘Not on my watch:’ WFP executive director McCain vows Ethiopia food theft won’t happen again.](#) However, she declined to provide a timeline for when the new tracking and tracing system would be rolled out and food distribution could resume in Ethiopia. She said the government ‘is becoming more transparent’ and is ‘willing to work with us a little more,’ but that WFP still needs ‘assurance’ (Devex, 19 July 2023).



Getachew Reda, president of the Tigray Interim Administration, participated in a large Tigray meeting at Denver (US) on 22 July and [stated that one of the things he wanted to do during his stay in the US is to discuss with USAID](#) and US government the possibility of reconsidering the decisions they made regarding food aid. There are doubts in some quarters whether he might manage to secure these meetings, because the US would be wary of ruffling feathers with Addis Ababa.

And also:

- Reuters, 10 July 2023: [Hunger haunts Ethiopia's Tigray region after years of war](#) (with video report)
- The Guardian, 29 June 2023: [‘We blame government and aid agencies’: food relief thefts in Ethiopia leave those in need with nothing](#)
- Jan Nyssen, André Crismer: [Au Tigré, toujours en proie à la famine, l’aide alimentaire a été suspendue](#) (La Libre Belgique) [in French] (In Tigray, still plagued by famine, food aid has been suspended)
- Vatican News, 4 July 2023: [Caritas: Food aid suspension in Ethiopia is 'inhumane'](#)
- Addis Standard, 29 June 2023: [Tragedy strikes Abiy Addi IDP Camp as hunger claims hundreds of lives in Tigray, thousands remain in peril](#)
- AFP, 4 July 2023: [Ethiopia's Tigray sees 'sharp increase' in hunger: UN](#)
- Tigray Television, 9 July 2023: [Tigray Health Research Institute reveals 88% of households in Tigray affected by food insecurity](#)
- Addis Standard, 7 July 2023: [MSF pleads for immediate resumption of food distributions after recording alarming rise of acute malnutrition in Ethiopia](#)
- Lord Alton [questioned the UK Minister of Foreign Affairs](#) about when the UN’s food assistance in Tigray will be restored – reponse: When the investigation into corruption is completed. Starvation is the consequence....

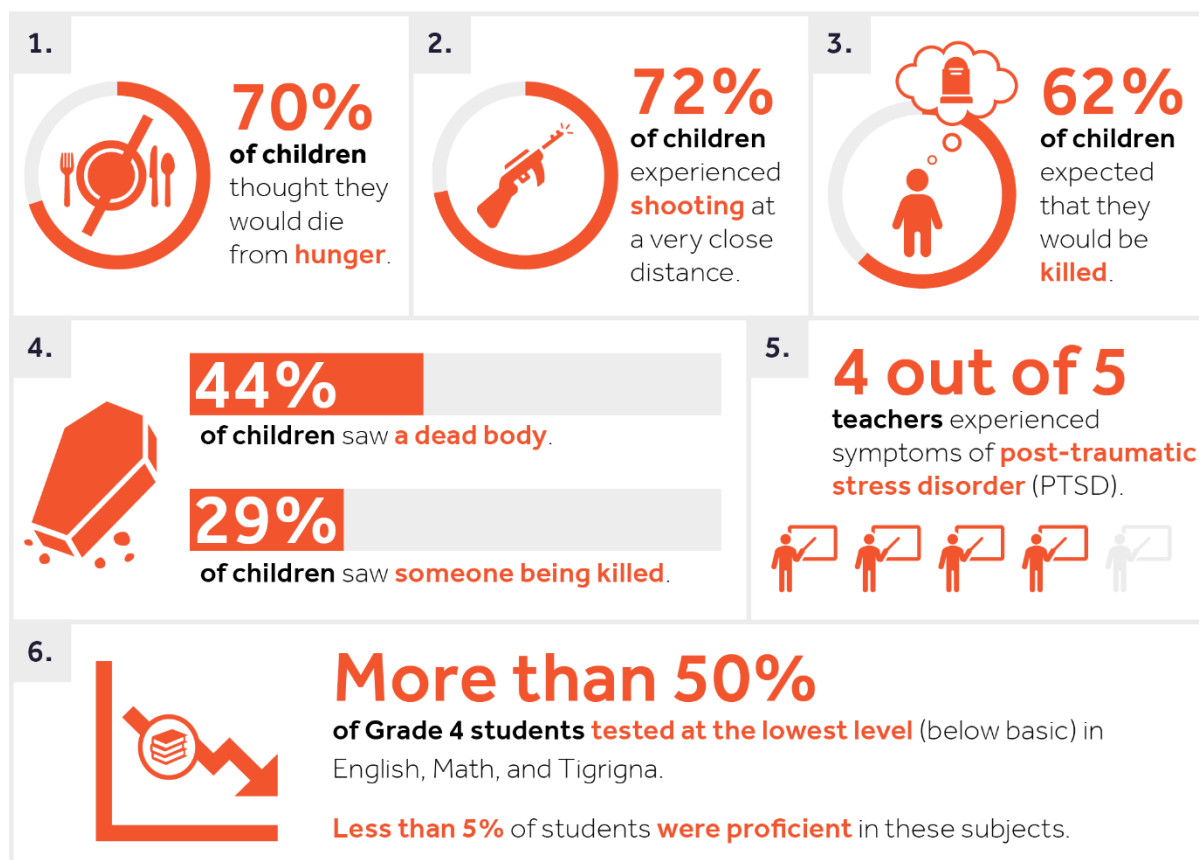
## 2. Accountability for war crimes

We need to continue insisting on the gravity of human rights abuses that have occurred in the Tigray War. In Ethiopia, accountability, reparations, and atonement for the wrongdoers are necessary for reconciliation to occur.

- Kenya Human Rights Commission, 10 July 2023: [First-of-its-Kind Civil Society Monitor Finds Disturbing Gaps in Tigray Peace Deal](#)
- Aaron Maasho and Martin Witteveen: [An indifferent world looks on as Ethiopia obstructs justice for Tigray](#) (The Guardian)
- New Lines Magazine, 18 July 2023: [The Sexually Violated Women of Tigray Demand Justice](#)
- BBC, 7 July 2023: [Ethiopia Church apologises to followers in Tigray over war](#). (Note that the apology concerns failure to deliver humanitarian assistance, but not their overall support for the war on Tigray.)
- Addis Standard, 11 July 2023: [Orthodox Patriarch, delegation return to Addis without meeting Tigray religious leaders](#)
- Ethiopian Watch (African Civil Society Organisations): [Monitoring of Six Commitments Under the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement](#)



- The Luminos Fund, 29 June 2023: [Examining Levels of Learning Loss, Trauma, and Resilience in Children, Parents, and Teachers in Tigray, Ethiopia](#)



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### 3. Western Tigray

On 18 July, the Ethiopian Cable published an editorial “Ahistorical claims to western Tigray”, in which our work on historical maps is largely cited. I can forward the Ethiopian Cable (Issue 190) upon request.

The database itself has also been strongly expanded, yet confirming the earlier findings: Nyssen, Jan. (2023). [Western Tigray in 165 historical and 33 ethno-linguistic maps \(1475-2014\)](#) (v. 7.1). Zenodo.

See also:

- Tigrai Television, 30 June 2023: [Tigray Interim Administration warns Ministry of Education to correct constitutional transgression](#). (This comes following Ethiopia’s Ministry of Education report compiled schools in Western, Northwestern, and Southern Tigray under Amhara Region)
- Labzaé, M., 2023. [Wolqayt, la terre promise et ses limites. Mobilisations nationalistes amhara, foncier et bureaucratie dans la guerre civile éthiopienne \(2016-2022\)](#) [in French] ([Wolqayt, the](#)

[Promised Land and its limits: Amhara nationalism, land, and bureaucracy in the Ethiopian Civil War \(2016-2022\)](#)). Critique internationale, 99 (2): 109-130

- Addis Standard, 8 July 2023: [Amhara region says activities kicked off to resolve identity, boundary issues with Tigray region through referendum](#)
- Tigray Television, 19 July 2023: [Tigray Interim Administration says Ethiopia's Ministry of Health's report compiling districts of Tigray under Amhara Regional State](#) violates constitution of the land and disturbs the ongoing peace process.
- The Economist, 9 July 2023: [War crimes in Tigray may be covered up or forgotten](#) (satellite images suggest burial grounds in Western Tigray are being burned)

#### 4. Upcoming conferences

International conference **“Victims and Transitional Justice”**, organised at Ghent University, 13-15 March 2024. Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15 September 2023. <https://justicevisions.org/justice-visions/conference-march-2024/>

AGU23, session on **“Advances in Earth Observation and Monitoring Impact of Armed Conflict on Ecosystem Services”**: <https://agu.confex.com/agu/fm23/prelim.cgi/Session/188200> (strict abstract submission deadline: 2 August)

GAPSYM16 - International conference **“Knowledge production, research ethics and authorship in African contexts”**. Save the date: 13-14 November 2023 – University of the Western Cape (hybrid format). There will be several **presentations concerning Tigray and Ethiopia**. <https://www.africaplatfrom.ugent.be/event/gapsym16-knowledge-production-research-ethics-and-authorship-african-contexts>

International Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Conference **“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 75: Rethinking and Constructing its Future Together”** 6-8 December 2023 - Ghent University, Belgium. <https://hrrn.ugent.be/conf2023/>

#### 5. Scientific publications

- Asgedom, Akeza Awealom; Abirha, Birhanu; Tesfay, Askual; Gebreyowhannes, Kelali; Abraha, Hayelom; Bugssa, Gessesew; Abrha, Mesele; Tsadik, Maceh; Gebrehiwet, Tesfay; Gebreyesus, Aregawi; Desalew, Tilahun; Alemayehu, Yibrah; Mulugeta, Afework. (2023). [Unimproved water and sanitation contributes to childhood diarrhoea during the war in Tigray, Ethiopia: a community based assessment](#). Scientific Reports. 2023. 7.
- Fisseha G, Gebrehiwet TG, Gebremichael MW, et al., 2023. [War-related sexual and gender-based violence in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia: a community-based study](#). BMJ Global Health 2023;8:e010270.
- Gesesew, Hailay; Kebede, Hafte; Berhe, Kenfe; Fauk, Nelsensius; Ward, Paul. (2023). [Perilous medicine in Tigray: a systematic review](#). Conflict and Health. 17.

- Hagazi N, Hadgu K, Tafere B, Mokria M, Birhane E, Abiyu A, Hailemariam G, Aynekulu E, Gebrekirstos A, Kassa H, Garrity D, Bourne M, Winowiecki L, Vågen T, Minang PA and Bräuning A. 2023. [A Guide to Landscape Restoration Initiatives: Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation with Evidence and Lessons from Tigray, Ethiopia](#). Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and Nairobi: World Agroforestry (ICRAF).
- Kidane, Gebretsadkan; Zereabruk, Kidane; Aberhe, Woldu; Hailay, Abrha; Mebrahtom, Guesh; Gebremeskel, Gebreamlak; Haile, Teklehaimanot; Teklemichael, Desalegn. (2023). [Time to recovery from severe acute malnutrition and its predictors among under five children admitted to therapeutic feeding units of general and referral hospitals in Tigray, Ethiopia, 2020: a prospective cohort study](#). BMC Pediatrics. 23.
- Lemlem Fitwi Weldemariam, Patrick Sakdapolrak, Ayansina Ayanlade (2023). [Household food-security strategies and migration in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia](#). Scientific African. e01801.
- Nyssen, J., Negash, E., Van Schaeybroeck, B., Haegeman, K. and Annys, S., 2023. [Crop cultivation at wartime—plight and resilience of Tigray’s Agrarian Society \(North Ethiopia\)](#). *Defence and Peace Economics*, pp.608-645.
- Obermeier, Anna Marie; Håvard Strand & Georgina Berry (2023) [Trends in State-Based Armed Conflict, 1946–2022](#), *Conflict Trends*, 1. Oslo: PRIO.
- Phillips, James; Roy, Charlotte; Mulugeta Gebregziabher. (2022). [The international humanitarian response to famine in Tigray, Ethiopia: Lessons from the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970](#). Global Health Action. 15.
- Weldegiargis, Aregawi; Abebe, Haftom; Abraha, Hiluf; Abrha, Meron; Tesfay, Tsegay; Belay, Rieye; Araya, Alemnesh; Gebregziabher, Mengish; Godefay, Hagos; Mulugeta, Afework. (2023). [Armed conflict and household food insecurity: evidence from war-torn Tigray, Ethiopia](#). Conflict and Health. 17.

## 6. Others

- Addis Standard, 12 July 2023: [Tigray Orthodox leaders remain on course to appoint episcopates amid efforts to resolve schism](#)
- In the UK, the [Minister of Foreign Affairs has replied to Parliamentary Questions about Tigray](#), asked by David Alton (Member of the House of Lords) – 1. Need for a Donors’ Conference to coordinate efforts to enable the physical reconstruction of Tigray and deepen peace building; 2.prosecution of perpetrators of atrocity crimes: 3. Deaths of 700 people of hunger in Shire Camp; 4.Total number of dead and displaced in Tigray.
- BBC, 9 July 2023: [Giessen Eritrea festival clashes leave 26 police officers injured](#)
- Annelies Müller: [Comment on the events in Giessen, Germany](#) - the ruling party in Eritrea held a so-called ‘festival’ designed to reinforce the regime, a slap in the face for all young Eritreans who are trying to make a new life in Europe.
- AFP, 6 July 2023: [Ethiopian PM vows to dismantle all paramilitary forces in country](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 24 July 2023: [Ethiopia: Oromo Opposition Figures Held Despite Court Orders](#)  
- Release 7 Senior Party Leaders Jailed for Up to 3 Years

## Digest 58. Universities open again after three years of academic standstill, but “normalcy” is yet to return (22 August 2023)

This 58<sup>th</sup> digest holds a collection of news items that we received from Tigray (section 1), followed by a startling report on the dire food situation (section 2). Further we pay attention to the military conflict in the Amhara Region, including first-hand information (section 3) and once more we demand justice for war crime victims (section 4). There is a notice for the première of a new video “Tigray cultural heritage under siege” (section 5), as well as a list of other media pieces that, by sheer coincidence, are all connected to Eritrea (section 6).

We take this chance to wish all Tigrayan women a nice [Ashenda holiday](#) despite the sorrows! While Ashenda celebrations in villages are more socially genuine and less standardized, the Mekelle Ashenda festival is an eye-catcher ([see this video by Tewodros Hailemichael and Thera Mjaaland](#)). For the first time since 2019, after the emergence of COVID-19 and especially after the war, Ashenda will be celebrated in Mekelle today, 22 August.



*Mid-August is when the ashenda flowers bloom in Tigray (and also in the [Tigray Garden](#) in Belgium)*



## 1. News from the ground in Tigray

In Mekelle University (MU) and the three other universities in Tigray, BSc, MSc and PhD study programs have resumed. The admitted students are Tigrayan students who were studying in the universities in Tigray but were forced to stop their study due to the war, and others who had been studying in universities outside Tigray but had no opportunity to join their previous universities. We understand also that staff rooted in other regions of Ethiopia have returned back to MU in order to take up their teaching activities. Yet, coping up with three years of academic standstill will be an enormous task for the four universities in Tigray.

Reversely, the poor salary payment conditions and acute shortage of medical equipment have pushed numerous medical doctors to leave the Ayder hospital and relocate to Addis Ababa or abroad. Also in Adigrat, around 80 medical doctors have left the town. A quantitative analysis of the brain drain induced by the Tigray war, the blockade, as well as the subsequent crisis, is required.

On the positive side, we learnt that the rural road from Hagere Selam to *tabiya* [Mika'el Abiy](#) has been overhauled and even extended down to the [Inda Abba Hadera monastery](#), 20 km in total. Also in the town of Hagere Selam, 11 km of roads were renovated, as a joint effort by TDF, the municipality and the Dogu'a Tembien woreda. This is not a stand-alone example but it indicates some revival taking place in Tigray. (Photo report of the full road trip mid-August is available upon request)

"Normalcy" has however not at all returned to Tigray, and the impressive recent **eye-witness report by Mulugeta Gebrehiwot** (published by Tufts University, USA) is a must for anyone who wants to know the real living conditions in Tigray: [Part One](#), and [Part Two](#).

Further reading:

- The Guardian, 7 August 2023: [‘People are under siege’: why Ethiopia’s war in Tigray isn’t over](#) (with focus on the Irob indigenous people in Tigray, still largely occupied by Eritrean troops)
- Tghat, 2 August 2023: [Tigray – State of Affairs: A First Person Account](#)
- AFP, 27 July 2023: [Tigray Says Demobilised 50,000 Fighters Under Peace Process](#)
- BBC, 3 August 2023: [Ethiopian church expels Tigray priests amid rift](#)

## 2. The WFP aid stoppage may have a more detrimental effect in Tigray than the siege a year earlier

Specifically in the Central and Southeastern zones, more Tigrayan households are in the worst stage of food insecurity in June 2023 than they were a year earlier, according to the first significant evaluation completed since the cessation of food aid. More than one in ten children under the age of two were found to be suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and the gross acute malnutrition rate for children under the age of five was 38%, exceeding the threshold for famine, according to a study conducted by researchers at the Tigray Health Research Institute, Mekelle University and Adigrat University. Data from the analysis indicate that the effect of the siege effect on Tigray's food security in June 2022 was

not as severe as the effect of aid suspension in June 2023. Read the [highlights of the report, summarized by Duke Burbridge](#), and published by Tghat.com

Early August, news were made that the WFP had cautiously began distributing food aid in Tigray. The Commissioner of Tigray's Disaster Risk Management Commission confirmed the resumption of certain relief activities in select sections of the region, but cautioned that this should not be interpreted as the restoration of stalled food aid; rather, it is the resumption of the safety net program (PSNP). The distinction is that humanitarian aid imposes no requirements on recipients, whereas safety net programs require people to engage in particular public labor activities, for which many of the people who need food aid are simply too weak.

An independent source confirmed, indeed, that WFP does not yet deliver any humanitarian food aid. The small distribution that occurred, was a pilot resumption of PSNP. Humanitarian distributions have not started at all. We learnt in addition that Tigray's share of PSNP for the war years will not be available retroactively.

#### **Further readings** on the humanitarian situation in Tigray

- Addis Standard, 11 August 2023: [“I lost my two newborn babies due to hunger” – a mother in Abiy Addi IDP camp, Tigray](#)
- BBC, 19 August 2023: [Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: Deaths from starvation after aid halted - official](#)
- OCHA, 27 July 2023: [Ethiopia – Situation Report](#)
- Addis Standard, 31 July 2023: [Editorial: Condemning abhorrent food aid theft by cutting aid is punishing victims twice. Death is staring in the face of millions in Ethiopia, rescue them now!](#)
- Associated Press, 8 August 2023: [The World Food Program slowly resumes food aid to Ethiopia after months of suspension and criticism](#)
- Addis Standard, 9 August 2023: [Authorities in Tigray region dispute reports of resumption of food aid by WFP](#)
- Tigray Emergency Coordination Centre [Operational update, 04 August 2023 \(summarized by Tghat\)](#)
- Tghat, 16 August 2023: [Nutrition support for Tigrayan children cut for third straight month](#)

### **3. Military conflict and curfew in Amhara Region**

An armed conflict erupted between the Ethiopian army and the Fano militias in Amhara region. See some media reports:

- AlJazeera, 4 August 2023: [Ethiopia declares state of emergency following clashes in Amhara](#)
- Crisis24, 2 August 2023: [Ethiopia: Increased tensions likely in Amhara Region through late August amid ongoing military operations](#)
- Al Jazeera, 8 August 2023: [What is behind the latest fighting in Ethiopia?](#)
- ICHREE, 10 August 2023: [De-escalate tensions in Amhara](#)
- Reuters, 14 August 2023: [Suspected air strike kills 26 in Ethiopia's Amhara region](#)

- The New Humanitarian, 15 August 2023: [Ethiopia shaken by a new and growing rebellion in Amhara](#)
- BBC, 16 August 2023: [Why Ethiopia's Amhara militiamen are battling the army](#)
- France24, 10 August 2023: [Ethiopia's restive Amhara 'calm' after govt claims militia retreat](#)
- Ethiopia Insight, 14 August 2023: [Five reasons why Ethiopia is at war with itself, again](#)
- The Reporter, 12 August 2023: [Gov't says 1st phase Amhara region operation successful](#)
- Addis Standard, 12 August 2023: [Command Post admits civilian deaths in Amhara region, reveals list of suspects under custody](#)

I reached out to some of our alumni living in the Amhara region. One of them writes: “In Bahir Dar and other areas of the Amhara region, there has been fighting that resulted in numerous fatalities. My family is good, and my neighborhood is rather secure. After roughly a week of being under lockdown due to the violence, Bahir Dar has been rather stable as of August 11, and we are able to walk around the city. Due to the war, there has been no internet access in the Amhara region since the final week of July.”

Another alumnus, and previous long-standing staff of Mekelle University, has become an MP for the Amhara region. Back in 2020, he was a strong advocate of what he called a 'police operation against TPLF'. Now that war turns to Amhara region, he made this [statement](#) in the Ethiopian parliament on 8 August: “Instead of merely implementing curfews, true resolution requires actively engaging in our communities to promote peace. The problem's solution hinges on discussions, apologies, and deliberate, thoughtful consideration. Fano and ENDF collaborated alongside the Amhara people and other nations during challenging times. I suggest that the government redirects its efforts towards fostering peace through regional support and alternative strategies”.

The repercussions of war and state of emergency on civilian populations are properly expressed in this - Tigray has also experienced these repercussions, and to a great extent. Yet, the MP goes on to say that he views the war that Abiy and Fano waged against Tigray favorably (“...during challenging times”), calling in the earmarked enemy as a red herring.

Other Ethiopian politicians, such as Eskinder Nega, an ardent [supporter of the nazi Holocaust](#), call for Fano to increase its military presence throughout Ethiopia.

We can draw a few take-home messages from the foregoing:

- It is better to pursue dialogue than war, as we have advocated since the Tigray war began in 2020; remarkably, colleagues from the Amhara region vigorously resisted our call for peace at the time;
- If the Amhara region and its paramilitary force gave up their claims to and presence in parts of the Tigray, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Oromia regions, many of Ethiopia's problems may be resolved;
- Abiy Ahmed's Nobel Prize for Peace has still not been rescinded; and
- All around Ethiopia, independent inquiries into war crimes are required. The ICHREE's mandate ought to be extended.

**Further readings** on the armed conflict in Amhara region, **in French**, in **Dutch** and in **Italian**:

- Le Monde, 5 August 2023: [L'Éthiopie au bord d'un nouveau conflit après des affrontements en Amhara](#) [in French] (Ethiopia on the brink of new conflict after clashes in Amhara)
- ANSA, 5 August 2023: [Etiopia, 'ribelli dell'Amhara controllano tre città'](#) [in Italian] (Ethiopia, 'Amhara rebels control three cities')
- Africa Rivista, 3 August 2023: [Etiopia: scontri in Amhara, segnalate interruzioni ad internet](#) [in Italian] (Ethiopia: clashes in Amhara, internet outages reported)
- Il Riformista, 15 August 2023: [Etiopia senza pace, lo scontro in corso tra gli eserciti indipendenti contro le truppe del governo](#) [in Italian] (Ethiopia without peace, the ongoing clash between independent armies against government troops)
- NRC (Koert Lindijer), 8 August 2023: [Abiy Ahmed veroorzaakt nieuw etnisch conflict in Ethiopië door spanningen aan te wakkeren](#) [in Dutch] (Abiy Ahmed causes new ethnic conflict in Ethiopia by stoking tensions)
- Trouw (Joris Belgers), 13 August 2023: [De strijd in Amhara is de grootste uitdaging voor Ethiopië sinds de burgeroorlog in Tigray](#) [in Dutch] (The battle in Amhara is the biggest challenge for Ethiopia since the civil war in Tigray)

#### **4. Justice for the victims of war crimes**

One of our friends writes: "I travelled to Tigray for a couple of days to see my brothers and sisters. I returned with a mixed feeling. I am relieved that all my close family members are alive and safe, and it was really great to see the resilience of the population as a whole, but at the same time it is really devastating to learn closely about the extent and degree of the casualties and the devastation."

Civil Society Organisations from Tigray, as well as the Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide [expressed their concerns](#) about the possible termination of the UN Independent Commission of Human Rights Experts for Ethiopia (ICHREE), as demanded by the Ethiopian government. They insist on the extension of the mandate as the atrocities in Tigray have not been thoroughly investigated and the government is still committing such crimes all over the country.

- Amnesty International, 18 August 2023: [Ethiopia: Authorities must grant independent investigators, media unfettered access to Amhara region to probe violations under state of emergency.](#)
- Addis Standard, 25 July 2023: [Members of Congress call for sanctions on individuals responsible for human rights abuses in Western Tigray](#)
- Aaron Maasho and Martin Witteveen: [Ethiopië blokkeert gerechtigheid voor de slachtoffers in Tigray](#) (NRC) [in Dutch] (Ethiopia blocks justice for victims in Tigray)
- Tsedale Lemma on Twitter (15 August 2023): [There must be a universal clarity on the need to have unimpeded access for ICHREE to all areas of violence in Ethiopia](#)



LAST MINUTE: even after fleeing the country, Ethiopians are targeted by warfare

- The Guardian, 21 August 2023: [‘Fired on like rain’: Saudi border guards accused of mass killings of Ethiopians](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 21 August 2023: [Saudi Arabia: Mass Killings of Migrants at Yemen Border](#)

## 5. Tigray cultural heritage under siege: new video

A message from [www.tigrayatwar.org](http://www.tigrayatwar.org) : Religious and cultural heritage, including ancient churches and monasteries, define every part of people's life in Tigray. Integral to this heritage are Tigrayan priests and monks, considered God’s representatives on earth. They have been responsible for creating and protecting this precious historical, religious, and cultural heritage for hundreds of years. Churches, monasteries, manuscripts, and all associated precious heritage items have been ransacked and destroyed across the state of Tigray. There has also been a concerted attack on priesthood. For Tigrayans, this campaign of genocide is simply destroying an intrinsic aspect of their physical and spiritual lives, with devastating psychological effects.

A new video about the destruction of Tigray’s cultural heritage will be [premiered on 2 September](#) at 15:00 CET.

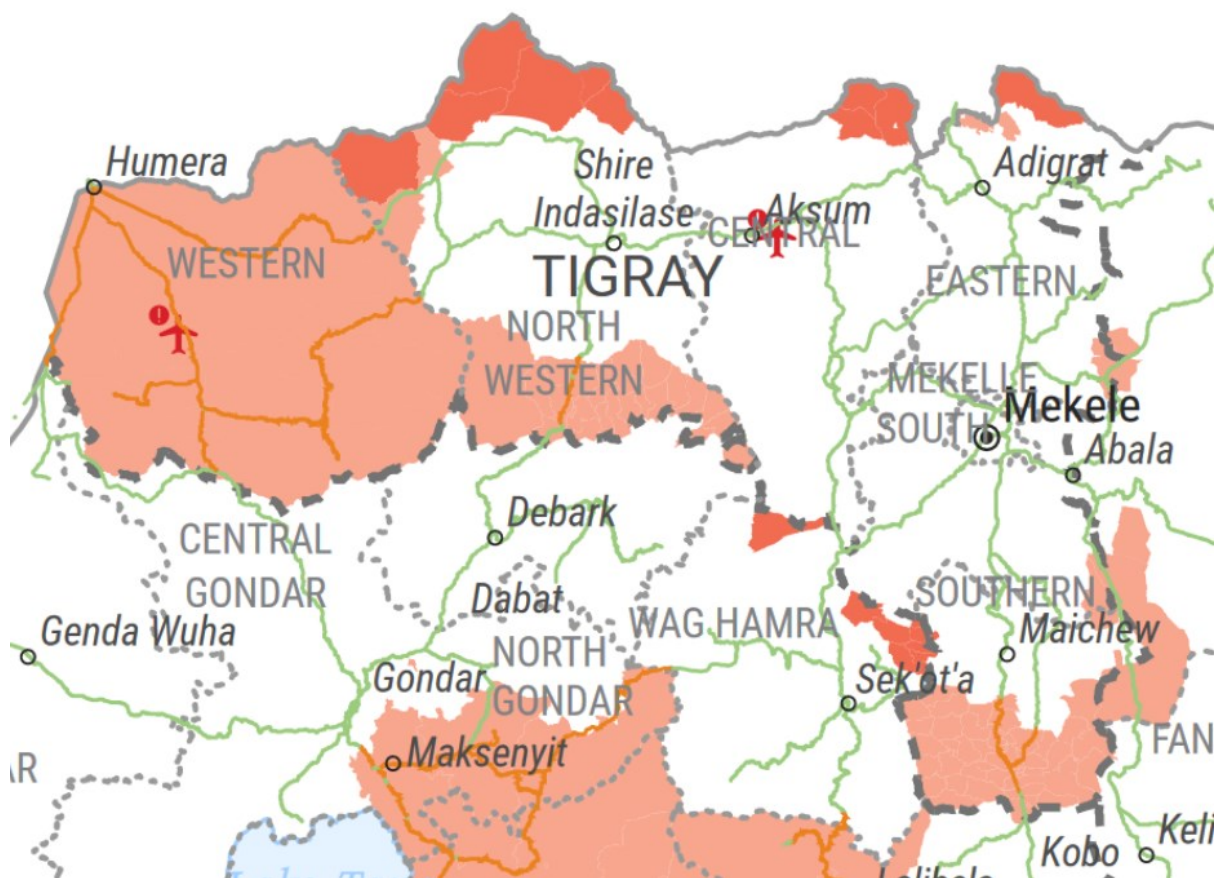
## 6. Other media articles

- Addis Insight, 21 July 2023: [Ethiopia Seeks Port Access Through Negotiations and Force](#)
- AFP, 3 August 2023: [Youth halt Eritrean dictator’s festival in Sweden](#)
- Mirjam Van Reisen: [Why the Swedish minister is wrong about the Eritrean festival disruption](#)
- Associated Press, 8 August 2023: [UN investigator says Eritreans experienced torture and sexual violence during national service](#)
- Martin Plaut, 11 August 2023: [Hard times in Ethiopia: the plight of Eritrean refugees inside Addis and across the country](#)
- Associated Press, 9 August 2023: [Eritrea’s repressive government criticizes exiles who attack overseas festivals as ‘asylum scum’](#)
- The Guardian, 12 August 2023: [Eritrean diaspora vow to continue disrupting festivals that ‘promote dictatorship’](#)
- Jurist, 11 August 2023: [UK government ‘appalled’ by human rights violations in Tigray, calls upon Eritrean forces to leave](#)
- Addis Standard, 11 August 2023: [Eritrea summons British envoy for remarks by Ambassador in Ethiopia on troops’ withdrawal](#)

**Digest 59. Humanitarian meltdown == Security situation in Mekelle  
(13 September 2023)**

Thank you for following our Tigray Digest. It needs to be reminded that, while I compile these Digests, they benefit each from the review of six to eight colleagues, from various places in the World. The Digest is sent out to 2100+ addresses – new subscribers welcome!

In this Digest, we must again and before all address the humanitarian situation in Tigray (section 1). To make it known to the outside world, there are three calls for the young generation, calling upon the power of artistry to address pressing human rights issues (section 2).



*Accessibility map of Tigray on 23 August 2023, [according to OCHA](#). In pink partially accessible, and in red hard-to-reach areas. Aksum and Humera airports not accessible; Mekelle and Shire are operational.*

A major breakthrough has been announced for Western and Southern Tigray (section 3), and for the internally displaced people from these areas, but is still largely needing to be implemented.

Part of the daily life in Tigray is about excavating mass graves, and the organisation of funeral services, such as for instance in the Irob district (section 4). And there is of course the worrisome security situation in Mekelle, including unexplained murders, and the beating up of Tigray opposition demonstrators (section 5).

We conclude the Digest with an overview of newly published scientific papers on the humanitarian catastrophe in Tigray (section 6), as well as some further press articles (section 7).

## 1. Humanitarian situation in Tigray

According to an article published by [Devex on 28 August 2023](#), aid manipulation in Ethiopia runs deep and spans decades. Devex reveals the systematic diversion and mismanagement of aid funds by both government officials and local militias. This practice has hindered the effective distribution of resources to those in need, exacerbating the results of the starvation campaign implemented by the Ethiopian government.

Tghat, in an article dated 26 August 2023, presents [alarming data from the International Organization for Migration](#) that depicts a humanitarian meltdown in Tigray. The data indicates a critical shortage of essential resources, including food, water, and medical supplies, contributing to the suffering and displacement of the local population.

Forbes reported on 2 September 2023 that over [1,400 people in Tigray have died of starvation](#) since the suspension of food aid which has had catastrophic consequences for the vulnerable population, pushing them further into the grip of hunger and malnutrition.

An update by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on 29 August 2023 highlights the challenges faced in providing aid to the affected areas of Ethiopia. The [OCHA's National Access Map](#) depicts the limited accessibility and restricted operational environment due to ongoing conflicts and violence. These barriers have impeded the timely delivery of aid and obstructed the efforts of humanitarian organizations to reach those in need.

In summary, deliberate starvation campaigns and the revelation of aid manipulation in Ethiopia spanning decades shed light on the deeper systemic issues hindering effective aid distribution. The humanitarian crisis in Tigray, exacerbated by the suspension of food aid, calls for immediate action. People are starving, so many destitute people are emaciated – make humanitarian help flow now!

### Further reading:

- Institute for Security Studies, 1 September 2023: [Ethiopia's transition depends on both dialogue and transitional justice](#)
- Le Monde, 5 September 2023: « [Ça ne sert à rien de crier, personne ne viendra te sauver](#) » : [en Ethiopie, le calvaire des Tigréennes](#) [in French] ([The ordeal of Tigrayan women in Ethiopia: 'Whether you shout or not, no one is going to come and rescue you'](#))
- Mekelle University, College of Health Sciences, 26 August 2023: [It was a state-of-the-art facility that provided world-class care to patients from all over the region and beyond. But now, after two years of war, the hospital is in shambles](#)
- Amnesty International, 4 September 2023: [“Today or tomorrow, they should be brought before Justice” – Rape, Sexual Slavery, Extrajudicial Executions, and Pillage by Eritrean Defense Forces](#)

- Amnesty International Belgium, 5 September 2023: [Éthiopie, crimes de guerre et possibles crimes contre l'humanité par des soldats érythréens](#) [in French] – [Eritrese soldaten pleegden gruweldaden in de regio Tigray](#) [in Dutch] (Ethiopia, war crimes and possible crimes against humanity by Eritrean soldiers)
- Human Rights Watch, 4 September 2023: [Justice for Serious International Crimes Committed in Ethiopia](#)
- Addis Standard, 22 August 2023: [Girls, women in Tigray long for justice and healing as Ashenda returns after three years](#)
- Addis Standard, 2 September 2023: [Human rights groups express concern over AU's premature termination of Tigray Commission's mandate](#)
- ONU Info, 24 August 2023: [Ethiopie : plus de 4,38 millions de personnes déplacées, plus de la moitié en raison du conflit](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: More than 4.38 million people displaced, of which more than half due to conflict)

## 2. Three calls for the young generation: the power of artistry to address pressing human rights issues

Several appeals present tremendous chances for anyone with a love and skill for spoken words and other artistic methods of expression to expose the heinous situation in Tigray and the wider Horn through poetry, art, and action. These platforms employ the power of art to bring serious human rights concerns to light. The contests aim to bring together poets, artists, and activists from across the African continent to creatively express their thoughts and perspectives on pressing issues such as social justice, climate change, women's empowerment, immigration, human trafficking, police brutality, and violence against women.

- [African Human Rights Spoken Words Contest](#) - Deadline: 30th October, 2023
- [#Art4Resilience](#): Knowledge Into Use Awards. Apply by 17 September 2023 for a chance to win 100,000 Swedish Kronor to develop your project!
- The following call is not limited to artists and open for all young people between 10 and 29: USAID launches [Youth Well-Being Competition](#). Deadline 29 September

## 3. Western and Southern Tigray

We [learn that the Ethiopian federal administration has decided](#), in the presence of leaders of Amhara and Tigray regional states, to fully repatriate individuals who were displaced from Southern and Western Tigray during the Amhara region's occupancy of these territories. The existing Amhara-installed administration in Western and Southern Tigray will be deposed, and a new administration will be elected by the people "in a shorter time." The Ethiopian army will preserve peace and security in these areas, and no other armed organizations will be permitted to operate there. A referendum would be held "when the people are ready and if there is a need."

In Southern Tigray, including Korem, Chercher and areas south of it including Alamata, *Fano* militia and Amhara Special Forces have already retreated and the area has been formally reassigned to the Tigray interim government administration. The number of IDPs originating from Southern Tigray is far less – there was no ethnic cleansing as it has been carried out in Western Tigray and parts of SW Tigray. Over there, [the retreat still needs to take place](#).

Yet, and even after return of the IDPs, hot issues will remain, such as the recognition of local identity both in Western and Southern Tigray. Administrators should be locally elected and not appointed from Mekelle. People in both Southern and Western Tigray told us that their primary issue with "Mekelle" is not whether they are part of Tigray or not, but rather the ability to use their own dialect rather than the standard Tigrinya enforced from Mekelle. Local ethnicities should be recognized, similarly to Irob and Kunama, including the western dialect of Tigrinya and the Raya dialect.

As background documentation, readers will know that we tried to retrieve all historical and language maps of Western Tigray and draw major trends from it. A synthetic map at A2 scale will soon be published by the Journal of Maps. [Watch out for the publication on ResearchGate!](#)

#### **4. Funeral services for civilian Irob people**

Bodies of civilians killed by the Eritrean army in Irob were exhumed from mass graves and buried in sacred ground. Funeral services took place in the churches of Haraze and Indamossa, in the southern part of the Irob woreda, free from Eritrean forces.

- [Tigray TV report](#) (2 September 2023) [in Tigrinya]
- [Tigray TV report](#) (3 September 2023) [in Tigrinya]
- [Tigray TV report](#) (3 September 2023) [in English]

**Further reading:** Addis Standard, 4 September 2023: [Eritrean forces continue abductions and sexual violence in Tigray's Irob Woreda, despite Pretoria peace deal](#)

#### **5. Insecurity in Mekelle**

People on the ground tell us that insecurity in Mekelle is rampant, in large part due to roaming deserters and unpaid soldiers. All talk about the truck full of apparent security people, that stopped and sexually harassed two young women in mid-August. When the women struggled and begged for help, one of them was carried down the street by her hair and crushed under the truck, according to reports. She died on the spot. It is unclear if the crime was committed by rogue deserters or by legitimate security personnel. A grenade attack in a bar also killed people, and a demonstration by Tigray's opposition parties was forcibly prohibited. The reasoning was that demonstration organizers cannot select when and where a demonstration can take place. To put things in perspective, [I took part](#)

[in two demonstrations](#), right in front of the European Union's headquarters in Brussels to condemn Ethiopian, Amhara, and Eritrean aggression against Tigray and the EU's complacency; the date and location of such demonstrations were chosen by the organizers – there was simply no issue about that.

#### Further reading:

- Addis Standard, 25 August 2023: [Nightclub grenade attack in Mekelle city kills four, injures 20](#)
- Addis Standard: 29 August 2023: [Women's Association of Tigray demands thorough investigation into recent brutal killing in Mekelle](#)
- The Elephant, 2 September 2023: [Joint Statement by Tigray Organizations on the Brutal Murder of Zewdu Haftu](#)
- Duke Burbridge, 6 September 2023: [An appeal to the Tigrayan Interim Regional Administration \(Tghat\)](#)
- Tghat, 7 September 2023: [Police officers beat up protesters in Mekelle](#)
- France24, 7 September 2023: [Police beat, arrest opposition supporters in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- BBC, 7 September 2023: [Tigray protesters brutally beaten and arrested](#)
- Addis Standard, 7 September 2023: [Interim leader imparts grave political, security crisis in Tigray amid mounting tension over disallowed protest rally](#)
- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot: [Help is Needed to Return Former Tigrayan Combatants to Civilian Life \(Reinventing Peace\)](#)
- ONU Info, 28 August 2023: [Ethiopie : l'ONU préoccupée par les affrontements dans la région d'Amhara et les détentions au Tigré](#) [in French] (Ethiopia: UN concerned by clashes in Amhara region and detentions in Tigray)

#### 6. Scientific papers (published over the last month)

- Abraha, H.E., Tequare, M.H., Teka, H. *et al.* Impact of a double catastrophe, war and COVID-19, on health service utilization of a tertiary care hospital in Tigray: an interrupted time-series study. *BMC Conflict and Health* **17**, 37 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-023-00537-6>
- Mishori, Ranit & McHale, Thomas & Green, Lindsey & Olson, Rose & Shah, Payal. (2023). [Conflict-related sexual violence continues in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). *The Lancet*. 10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01734-8.
- Girmatsion Fisseha *et al.* (2023). [War-related sexual and gender-based violence in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia: a community-based study](#). *BMJ global health*. 8. 10.1136/bmjgh-2022-010270.
- Lindsey Green *et al.*, 2023. [Broken promises: conflict-related sexual violence before and after the "Cessation of Hostilities Agreement" in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). Physicians for Human Rights & The Organization for Justice and Accountability in the Horn of Africa.
- Gebregziabher, T.N., Weldemicheal, M.Y., Tsegay, H.G., Mezgebo, G.K., Kelebe, H.E. and Haile, G.E., 2023. [The effects of the Tigray siege on household livelihoods and coping strategies in Mekelle City, Ethiopia](#). *Development in Practice*, pp.1-15.



## 7. Further press articles

- Warographics, 2 September 2023: [Amhara Crisis: Is Ethiopia the Next Yugoslavia?](#)
- The Economist, 15 August 2023: [Ethiopia risks sliding into another civil war](#)
- New York Times, 26 August 2023: [U.S. Knew Saudis Were Killing African Migrants](#)
- Corriere del Ticino, 2 September 2023: [Da Stoccolma, al Canada, fino a Tel Aviv: eritrei in protesta](#) [in Italian] (From Stockholm, to Canada, to Tel Aviv: Eritreans protest)
- Associated Press, 2 September 2023: [Rival Eritrean groups clash in Israel, leaving dozens hurt in worst confrontation in recent memory](#)
- VG (Norway), 5 September 2023. [Professor om Eritrea-opptøyer i Bergen: – Bare begynnelsen](#) [in Norwegian] ([Professor Tronvoll on Eritrean riots in Bergen: – “Only the beginning”](#))
- Middle East Eye, 24 August 2023: [Ethiopian survivors recount horror of mass killings at Saudi-Yemen border](#) - Migrants who escaped the Tigray war say they were met with live fire and forced to bury the dead in mass graves along Saudi-Yemen border
- Tagblatt (Switzerland), 28 August 2023: [Spione aus Eritrea versuchen Geld von Flüchtlingen zu erpressen – Betroffene haben Angst vor den Behörden](#) [in German] ([Spies from Eritrea enter Switzerland disguised as refugees](#). Their goal: to spy on people who think they are safe here, to threaten them and to collect taxes for the dictator back home. The Swiss authorities know about the dangers, but do not act.)
- Addis Standard, 18 August 2023: [Students’ resilience, the struggle to rebuild education in war-ravaged Tigray](#)
- VoA, 5 September 2023: [Shortage of Goods, Reduced Health Care Hit Ethiopia's Volatile Amhara Region](#)
- The Guardian, 8 September 2023: [Ethiopian troops accused of mass killings of civilians in Amhara region](#)



## Digest 60. UN and EU fail Tigray's victims (5 October 2023)

This 60th Tigray Digest focuses on the unprincipled reaction of the UN Human Rights Council member states on the crucial study by the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE): the UNHRC intends to stop ICHREE's activities (section 1)! Further, we address the military death toll of the Tigray war (section 2). As many of our readers are in Belgium, or have otherwise links with Mekelle University, we wished to highlight the visit of the Belgian Ambassador to Tigray and Mekelle University (section 3). Further, we address an upcoming streamed Tigray event in Amsterdam (section 4), as well as scientific publications (section 5), a session and papers at the Fall Meeting of the American Geophysical Union (section 6), and media articles (section 7).



Photo ©Splendor Event "Rekindling hope through education in war-ravaged Tigray" (on 8 October - see topic 4)

### 1. *Realpolitik* at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

*"Realpolitik is the approach of conducting diplomatic or political policies based primarily on considerations of given circumstances and factors, rather than strictly following explicit ideological notions or moral and ethical premises."* (Wikipedia)

The bad news indeed comes from the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the UNHRC: [no motion has been received to renew the mandate](#) of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE). There is little hope that the war crimes of the Tigray War and elsewhere in Ethiopia will be investigated.

Human Rights Watch's Lucy McKernan stated: "Having no resolution is scandalous in the face of the report of the experts that was just published." She points to the important report published by the ICHREE on 18 September 2023. In a statement on 4 October, HRW further specifies that the [EU Fails Ethiopia's Victims](#).

This is the **executive summary of ICHREE's report**: "In the present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 51/27, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on

Ethiopia provides an overview of the situation of human rights in Ethiopia. It identifies grave and systematic violations of international law and crimes committed in Tigray, as well as Amhara, Afar and Oromia. Violations include mass killings, rape, starvation, forced displacement and arbitrary detention. The conflict in Tigray has not ended, with Eritrean troops and Amhara militias engaging in ongoing violations. Past and current abuses in these four regions demand further investigation. The Government of Ethiopia has failed to effectively investigate violations and has initiated a flawed transitional justice consultation process. Ethiopia has sought to evade international scrutiny through the creation of domestic mechanisms ostensibly to fight impunity. The Commission recommends a range of measures to end current abuses and promote serious transitional justice.”

The ICHREE report was also [summarized by UN news](#).

On 2 October, a second report of the ICHREE was published, as powerful as the first one (if more technical): [The acute risk of further atrocity crimes in Ethiopia: an analysis](#)

We also note the appalling coincidence of the EU signing its [Multi-annual Indicative Programme \(MIP\) with the Ethiopian government](#) back into being on the day the ICHREE report was published. Really grim. Here is EU [Commissioner Urpilainen’s tweet](#): check out the replies.

On 18 September, Amnesty International insisted already that the [UN Human Rights Council must renew the mandate of its investigative body in Ethiopia](#)

#### **On the same topic:**

- Reuters, 4 October 2023: [UN-mandated investigation into Ethiopia atrocities lapses](#)
- The Guardian, 4 October 2023: [UN investigation into Tigray abuses to end despite reports of more atrocities](#)
- HRW, 4 October 2023: [Human Rights Council: EU Fails Ethiopia’s Victims - No Action Following Scathing Report Highlighting UN’s Prevention Role](#)
- AFP, 18 September 2023: [Ethiopia Conflict At A 'National Scale': UN Experts](#)
- The Guardian, 19 September 2023: [Tigray atrocities continuing almost a year after ceasefire, UN experts warn](#)
- The Reporter, 23 September 2023: [Tigray officials demand redesigned transitional justice model](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 7 September 2023: [54th session of the UN Human Rights Council: Ethiopia – Renew the mandate of the ICHREE](#)
- Mehari Taddele: [Tigray Atrocities: Extending ICHREE Mandate Crucial for Accountability](#) (The Elephant)
- UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on International Law, Justice, and Accountability: [The three horsemen of the Tigray war: Mass Killing, Sexual Violence and Starvation](#)
- Antonia Mulvey and Kirsty Hare: [Ethiopia’s Conflict Is Spreading, But UN Human Rights Council May End Expert Investigation Anyway](#) (Just Security)
- Addis Standard, 21 September 2023: [US lawmakers call for extension of UN experts’ mandate on Ethiopia ahead of decisive vote](#)

- Addis Standard, 26 September 2023: [TPLF Central Committee calls for UN experts' mandate extension, full implementation of Pretoria agreement; admits "internal weaknesses"](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 29 August 2023: Abiy's transitional justice model fails to impress in Tigray (full text available upon request)
- Alex de Waal & Chidi Odinkalu: [Ethiopians' Human Rights Don't Matter](#) (Reinventing Peace)

## 2. Military death toll in Tigray

Tigray will hold three days of mourning (13-15 October) as more lists of soldiers killed in the Tigray war become available. Many bodies are still missing, which is why symbolic burials are taking place. It has been anticipated that the Tigray leadership embraced the terms of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement due to the large number of Tigray Defence Force (TDF) casualties. At the start of the war, it was widely assumed that with roughly equal losses between the two opposing parties (ENDF, Amhara, and Eritrea forces versus TDF), Abiy Ahmed could win the Tigray war on the military field (rather than the moral field). The loss of half a million soldiers (out of a hundred million inhabitants) could be hidden from the Ethiopian public by trickling the information out gradually.

Reversely, in Tigray, there have been hundreds of thousands of military casualties (along with massacres and starvation) out of a population of only six million, and many people are struggling to accept this terrible reality. Tigray's military victims include soldiers from the Tigray Special Forces, which existed at the start of the war; volunteers who flocked to the TDF in early 2021 in response to the widespread massacres by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces; and TDF soldiers who were mobilized in a conventional manner during the second half of the war period.

For instance, in Hagere Selam, the names of TDF soldiers killed were announced, including those who perished more than a year ago. People tell me that "almost in every house a soldier died". The majority are young men of around 20 years old, also a few young women, but many less. In some houses, people mourn two or three TDF soldiers.

For quite some time, people have been calling for these announcements, as well as the declaration of national mourning days. People might otherwise be stranded, waiting for their loved ones to return home.

Again, it could be useful to remind the terms of our initial [Appeal by Concerned Scientists and Development Professionals \(11 November 2020\)](#): "Warfare will not bring a viable solution, for any of the involved parties. Particularly, Tigray is heading for famine, at levels that will rival the disaster of 1984-1985. We, therefore, call upon the world to demand negotiations and a ceasefire in northern Ethiopia, and to rapidly organise efficient delivery of food and other humanitarian aid to Tigray." Unfortunately, the World has looked away...

### Further reading:

- The Reporter, 30 September 2023: [Tigray accuses AU of walking away from Ethiopia peace deal implementation](#)

- Addis Standard, 3 october 2023: [Tigray Interim Admin declares three-day mourning period to honor veterans lost in war; official announcements of combatants' deaths to be made](#)
- General Tadesse Werede, Deputy President of the Tigray Interim Administration: [press briefing about the three-day mourning](#) [in Tigrinya]

### 3. Visit of Belgian Ambassador to Tigray and Mekelle University

The Belgian Ambassador to Ethiopia recently visited Tigray extensively, including a high-level visit to Mekelle University. See the Ambassador's LinkedIn posts:

- [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stefaan-thijs-75752518\\_last-week-together-with-5-other-colleagues-activity-7111325848317607936-MnNE](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stefaan-thijs-75752518_last-week-together-with-5-other-colleagues-activity-7111325848317607936-MnNE)
- [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stefaan-thijs-75752518\\_many-thanks-to-mekelle-university-for-warm-activity-7110983773030109184-ibF2](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stefaan-thijs-75752518_many-thanks-to-mekelle-university-for-warm-activity-7110983773030109184-ibF2)

After witnessing what happened, we hope that there will be a stronger Belgian and European commitment to restoring Tigray's human rights situation, food security, territorial integrity, and development cooperation - after all, the Belgian Development Cooperation with Ethiopia owes a lot to the dynamic cooperation programs with Mekelle University, where it all began.

### 4. Musical event FOR TIGRAY in Amsterdam (live & stream)

Sunday October 8 - 20:00 CET

Rekindling hope through education in war-ravaged Tigray (Ethiopia)

<https://splendoramsterdam.com/en/agenda/111344703/tigray-benefiet-live-stream>

Music by Splendor musicians & Tigrayan musicians (krar, vocals and flute); dance by Tegar Youth Holland; presentation by Jan Willem Baljet & Gebrekirstos G. Gebremeskel

### 5. Scientific publications related to the Tigray War

- Nyssen, J. and Biadgilgn Demissie, 2023. [Administrative and ethno-linguistic boundaries of Western Tigray \(Ethiopia\) since 1683](#). *Journal of Maps*, 19(1), p.2257249. OPEN ACCESS
- Teklay Negash Gebregziabher, Micheale Yifter Weldemicheal, Hadush Gebregziabher Tsegay, Gidey Kidu Mezgebo, Haftu Etsay Kelebe & Guesh Endrias Haile (2023): [The effects of the Tigray siege on household livelihoods and coping strategies in Mekelle City, Ethiopia](#), Development in Practice.

- Tesfay Gebregzabher Gebrehiwot et al. 2023. [War and Health Care Services Utilization for Chronic Diseases in Rural and Semiurban Areas of Tigray, Ethiopia](#). JAMA network open.
- Awol Legesse & Hale Teka (2023). [Maternal mortality during war time in Tigray, Ethiopia: A community-based study](#). BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

## 6. Tigray at the AGU 2023 conference

At the American Geophysical Union's annual conference (11-15 December, both on-site and online), there will be a session on [Advances in Earth Observation and Monitoring Environmental Impacts of Armed Conflicts](#) (co-hosted by Tigrayan researchers) and eight papers about the effects of the Tigray war will be presented in different sessions. [Check out the programme](#).

## 7. In the media

- Financial Times, 4 October 2023: [Ethiopia's plan to rebuild in the wake of a 'brutal' war](#)
- Washington Post, 21 September 2023: [US State and Justice Department contractor charged with spying for Ethiopia](#)
- Fitsum Gebre and Dereje T Assefa: [Tigray at the Crossroads of Despair or Hope](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 18 September 2023: [Is Eritrea stoking conflicts between its migrants abroad?](#)
- [World Food Programme explains its current stand on Aid to Ethiopia](#) (13 September 2023)
- Devex, 29 August 2023: [Ethiopia food theft sparks WFP diplomatic row](#)
- WHO: [Tigray Region Health Cluster Operational Presence Map](#) (September 2023)
- Frankfurter Rundschau, 13 September 2023: [Äthiopien: Nach den Tigray die Amhara](#) [in German] (After the Tigrayans, the Amhara)
- Agenzia Nova, 18 September 2023: [Etiopia, Onu: Le violazioni proseguono nonostante l'accordo di pace siglato a Pretoria](#) [in Italian] (Ethiopia, UN: Violations continue despite peace agreement signed in Pretoria)
- Associated Press, 18 September 2023: [UN experts say Ethiopia's conflict and Tigray fighting left over 10,000 survivors of sexual violence](#)
- Reuters, 19 September 2023: [EU temporarily holds back food aid in Somalia after UN finds widespread theft](#)
- Addis Standard, 30 September 2023: [Tigray Interim Admin, TPLF vow to investigate corruption, bring comprehensive reform and ensure release of detained Tigrayans](#)
- UN Web TV, 23 September 2023: [Ethiopia - Deputy Prime Minister Addresses General Debate, 78th Session](#)
- Addis Standard, 22 September 2023: [Annual Tana Forum to be held in Bahir Dar city postponed amid escalating conflict](#)
- AFP, 21 September 2023: [Ethiopia's Lalibela Rocked By Artillery Fire: Residents](#)
- Associated Press, 26 September 2023: [Researchers have verified 1,329 hunger deaths in Ethiopia's Tigray region since the cease-fire there](#)
- Addis Standard, 26 September 2023: [Severe tree locust infestation wreaks havoc, exacerbating food insecurity in Tigray region](#)





*Croplands near Hagere Selam, by the end of October. The crop with reddish grains is sorghum; it performed very well because there were good spring rains, that provided sufficient soil moisture to pass the dry spells in the main kremti rainy season. The uniformly bright lands have been sown with the “new wheat” gifted by the Oromia region to the Tigray farmers; it performed well in these places because the soil is clayey, and fertilizer was used (though it was particularly expensive in 2023). In the mid-scene, soils are more sandy and stony, and (immature) crops had to be harvested early due to lack of soil moisture; there was hardly any rain in July.*

Unexpected rains occurred in Tigray in early November, affecting the harvest that was already poor due to missing rains in July. Elsewhere in Ethiopia, there has been [severe flooding due to El Niño conditions](#). The improved wheat seeds, gifted by the Oromia region, are well appreciated by the farmers in Tigray, as the crop produces uniformly good stands, though with small straw harvest. This “new wheat” is a short-stemmed high-yielding variety. The advantage of short stem is [lodging](#) resistance - hence higher quality yields are ensured.

WFP food aid to Tigray is resuming too slowly. People targeted for food aid are identified by the WFP staff. A friend in May Makden (on the main road, north of Mekelle) mentioned a WFP convoy passing by, composed of dozens of lorries, and closely supervised by WFP staff. Otherwise, there is very few movement of WFP trucks, most seemed unloaded or empty. Also UN agencies (and ICRC) are cutting their operations in Tigray, rather than expanding them because of budget constraints. See also: [OCHA Situation Report, 31 Oct 2023](#)

Some hopeful perspectives are villages that have kept their forests intact, managing it according to age-old bylaws. And, despite three years without budget, another village protected the apple tree nursery; there has been no irrigation, no harrowing or pruning, but

the trees have survived, indicating that the species is suitable for the highland areas of Tigray. The same village kept its five hand pumps operational. In these places people have seen no agricultural or water experts since three years, yet they continued managing their natural resources. However, the situation is not that positive in many other places. The starvation in six *tabiyas* of Abergele is extreme. The wereda says 95,000 out of a population of 107,000 need food. They announced 52 people died in the last weeks. It is also widely believed people are in desperate need in Dima, a woreda across the Tekezze under Tigrayan control.

In this Tigray Digest, we address the likelihood that war criminals will be tried, after the EU abandonment of the ICHREE (section 1), as well as the number of military victims of the Tigray War (section 2), the fate of the internally displaced people from Western Tigray (section 3), the brain drain from Tigray (section 4), and new scientific findings, all related to Tigray's environment (section 5). We conclude with the perspectives for Tigray, from the point of views of the Tigrayans (section 6), and list some other news items and opinion pieces (section 7).

#### **Further reading related to the humanitarian situation in Tigray:**

- BBC, 2 November 2023: [Tigray peace deal war anniversary: Humanitarian situation is 'dire'](#)
- WFP, 16 November 2023: [WFP launches new operating model to restart food distribution to millions of vulnerable Ethiopians](#)
- Al Jazeera, 2 November 2023: [One year on, peace holds in Tigray, but Ethiopia still fractured](#)
- Institute for Security Studies, 9 November 2023: [A year after the Pretoria agreement, hard work remains for Ethiopia](#)
- Makeda Saba: [War is likely: It is just a matter of timing](#) (Martin Plaut)
- Addis Standard, 31 October 2023: [A year after Pretoria peace agreement, challenges persist in rehabilitation of Tigray's ex-fighters](#)
- BBC, 23 November 2023: [Ethiopia drought: Fifty die of hunger in Tigray and Amhara amid aid freeze](#) (The number mentioned regards the Abergele woreda of Tigray only, and a few people in the adjacent Agaw zone of the Amhara region)
- Addis Standard, 21 November 2023: [Drought induced hunger claims dozens of lives, left millions at risk in Tigray and Amhara regions](#)
- The Guardian, 24 November 2023: [Weather tracker: Ethiopia hit by severe drought amid east Africa floods](#)

#### **1. After the EU abandonment of the ICHREE, many people in Tigray lost hope**

The European Union and its members have reversed their support for continued international monitoring of Ethiopia's human rights status at the UN Human Rights Council. Yet, people in Tigray have no confidence at all in domestic justice, carried out by the very government that sent its army for massacres and rape into Tigray. Harvard University took the lead in an [Ethiopia-wide opinion poll, with a sample of >6600 adults](#), in June-July 2023. The results show that in Tigray, only 2% of the respondents favored domestic trials of war criminals over hybrid



or international options. For the other regions of the country, the confidence was between 28% (Gambela) and 78% (Sidama).

This is particularly the case for victims of the man-made famine and of sexual violence. A survey of women in Tigray found that 8% had been raped during the Tigray War, but this is likely to be an undercount due to the stigma and because some of the areas worst impacted are still under Eritrean occupation, and were excluded from the survey. Women indeed struggle to seek help after being sexually assaulted and raped during the war, fearing ostracization. (The Washington Post, 26 November 2023: [Raped during Ethiopia's war, survivors now rejected by their families](#)). See also the newly released documentary, "[Speaking the Unspeakable: In the aftermath of weaponized rape in Tigray, North-Ethiopia](#)" by the Norwegian social anthropologist and filmmaker Thera Mjaaland and the Tigrayan journalist Kibrom Mebrahtom.

#### **Further reading:**

- Addis Standard, 28 November 2023: [Severe humanitarian crisis plagues Tigray region, with women bearing the brunt of violence and lack of support](#)
- UN News, 13 October 2023: [Ethiopia: Victims 'left in limbo' as rights probe mandate ends](#)

## **2. Number of military victims of the Tigray War**

All over Tigray, commemorative services are held for fallen TDF soldiers (Tigray Defence Forces); gradually the TDF informs the families of the fate of their missing child(ren). For each fallen soldier, relatives organize mourning ceremonies, mostly at several locations (in the home village, in the nearest town, in Mekelle). The mourning atmosphere dominates Tigray, leading almost to a collective depression. There are reportedly many whose families haven't been notified yet. People tell me that it has become common NOT to ask the usual polite question "how are you?, how is your family?" because the answer is already known and it is painful. In a recent opinion piece, Alex De Waal mentions [51,700 fallen TDF soldiers](#). As the number comes from within the TDF leadership, some people in Tigray suggested that the TDF may have communicated a lower number of fallen soldiers than what it is in reality, as there is talk about another war, this time against Eritrea in alliance with Abiy Ahmed. At this stage, many of our correspondents in Tigray mention that they do not want a new war, but some also say that Tigray could be dragged into such a war, on the condition that all regions of Ethiopia take their share in the mobilization. Important to note is that, in the last year, Tigray was kept out of violent conflict - including in Amhara. A new war would be catastrophic for communities in Tigray that are barely functioning.

Reversely, people also say that the number of 52k dead TDF soldiers is realistic. In most battles, the TDF losses were minimal – "if 6 or 10 soldiers died in a battle, the leadership was severely criticized". There were, however, huge losses of TDF soldiers during the (yet unexplained)

moves of TDF far into Afar and Amhara regions in 2021, as well as during the ENDF and Eritrean offensive in Northwestern Tigray in 2022. So, people assume, the total number announced could be true.

On the other side too, information is gradually coming out. In 2022, the Ministry of Defence estimated that 238,000 ENDF soldiers lost their lives in the Tigray War. Now, this seems a serious underestimate, and the real figure may be twice that high. We heard from first-hand witnesses how, for instance, the battle of Ala'isa went (in the last days of November 2020), that is a stronghold along the road between Mekelle and Hagere Selam. The ENDF soldiers couldn't pronounce "Ala'isa" and nicknamed the place "Bermuda", a place from where one does not come back. Witnesses mention the awful sight of thousands of dead bodies of ENDF and Eritrean soldiers, straddled all over the place, sent in wave by wave until the pass was ultimately taken after three days. Unfortunately, war brings out the worst in people: after the battle, looters came from the surrounding area, preying on the money and (stolen) gold that the fallen soldiers were carrying on them. There is a [video](#) showing Brigadier-General Haddish Efrem (EDF) and Major-General Zewdu Belay (ENDF) directing that battle from 10-km distance.

In the war between Russia and Ukraine, the ratio of casualties between defenders and attackers is also [estimated at 1:4 to 1:5](#).

### **3. Internally displaced people from Western Tigray cannot yet return home.**

The "agreement" has been made public time and time again: the displaced people from Western Tigray could return to their homesteads, and a referendum on the fate of this zone could be organized after a certain period of calm. Yet, in practice, Amharic *fano* militias and their Eritrean allies continue to make the law in Western Tigray, and nothing has changed for the displaced people. New IDPs are still being driven out of Western Tigray and Tselemti with numbers increasing in the last few weeks.

The extreme southern tip of Tigray also remains under control of the *fano militias*.

For these issues, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (i.e. return to Tigray) is simply not implemented.

#### **Further reading:**

- BBC, 7 November 2023: [Ethiopia plans vote to solve Tigray-Amhara territory dispute](#)
- Addis Standard, 2 November 2023: [HRW says fighting, atrocities persist in Tigray, Amhara regions a year after peace deal](#)
- Addis Standard, 30 October 2023: [Analysis: Why over one million IDPs in Tigray still linger in camps a year after peace deal](#)

- Mediapart, 11 October 2023: [En Éthiopie, les réfugiés oubliés et affamés du Tigré](#) [in French] (In Ethiopia, the forgotten and starved Tigrayan refugees)

#### 4. Brain drain from Tigray

An article was published by Africa Intelligence, on 29 November 2023: [Tigray grapples with growing exodus of doctors](#). This is the summary: The Tigray interim administration is struggling to prevent medics from leaving the region due to the economic crisis caused by civil war. The unfreezing of food aid by the World Food Programme and USAID should provide some relief, but it will not stop the brain drain affecting the medical sector. The resumption of flights between Addis Ababa and Mekelle has led to a mass exodus of general practitioners, surgeons, and specialists, who prefer to try their luck abroad. The region is also facing rampant inflation and a cash shortage, with civil servants still owed two years' arrears. The Ayder Referral Hospital in Mekelle is particularly bereft, with over half of its staff fleeing and basic operations unable to be carried out due to inadequate medical equipment. The interim administration estimates that 72% of Tigray's health infrastructure has lost medical equipment, with almost 30% destroyed or looted during the war. Kibrom Gebreselassie, director of Ayder hospital, has written to the federal Health Minister Lia Tadesse about the situation; he did multiple visits to Addis Ababa, where Higher Education Minister Berhanu Nega refused to see him.

(Full text of the Africa Intelligence article is available upon request).

We may add that there is not only an exodus of doctors, also qualified nurses and teachers leave the region for private hospitals and schools in Addis Ababa, or other regions of the country. Many employees of the tourism sector also moved to other places. Everyone is aware of recent events involving prosecution of Tigrayans elsewhere in Ethiopia; one nurse explained her decision as follows: "We need to feed our family, and after all, many regret what they have done against us; everybody hates Abiy now, if he appears on television in Addis, people change to another broadcaster. So I feel relatively safe".

In short: people who had never considered migrating before are now on the move or making plans to do so.

#### Further reading:

- Addis Standard, 16 November 2023: [Rising number of Tigray youth fleeing to the Arabian Peninsula amid food security challenges, limited job prospects](#)

#### 5. New scientific papers and conference, all related to Tigray's environment

- Hishe, S., Gidey, E., Zenebe, A., Bewket, W., Lyimo, J., Knight, J., & Gebretekle, T. (2023). [The impacts of armed conflict on vegetation cover degradation, Tigray, northern Ethiopia](#). *International Soil and Water Conservation Research*.

- Negash, E., Birhane, E., Gebrekirstos, A., Gebremedhin, M. A., Annys, S., Rannestad, M. M., ... & Nyssen, J. (2023). [Remote sensing reveals how armed conflict regressed woody vegetation cover and ecosystem restoration efforts in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). Science of Remote Sensing, 100108.
- [Advances in Earth Observation and Monitoring Environmental Impacts of Armed Conflicts](#), AGU fall meeting, 12 December

## 6. Tigray: *Quo Vadis?*

This private survey among friends and colleagues in Tigray indicates huge challenges. Overall and depending on their livelihood strategy, there may be different approaches. Farmers are developing new agricultural systems, gaining in autonomy. In the cities, there is tremendous unemployment, and salaries have enormously decreased in real terms. All over, there is big sorrow for the friends and relatives passed away. People fear to be dragged into a new war. Internally displaced persons make the towns overcrowded. Public services are often still dysfunctional. City dwellers and young farmers dream of internal or international migration... Everybody discusses their sorrows, leading to a very sad atmosphere. The situation is urgent and the UN and NGOs do not seem to have commensurate resources to allocate. A foreign expert with longstanding experience in Tigray (longer than me) mentions “I have never seen Tigray like this”.

Some people will say: “we think of Tigray as a country”, and mention that in Mekelle and the wider Tigray, one will only see the Tigrayan flag. And on the hotels, additionally there are the flags of the EU, UK, USA, China... But not the Ethiopian flag: “Those who came to massacre and rape us, they came under the cover of that flag...”. Many also find it hard to think of other Ethiopians, and their own place (if any) in Ethiopia, also stating “they were all united against us”. Yet, people want to be able to go elsewhere, in Ethiopia at least, and some do.

There is also a will to survive against all odds. See this exemplary success story where the Tigray authorities and universities assisted an accessible group of Tigray students prepare for final exams. Accordingly, 67% of the 9,514 Grade 12 students who took final exams in Tigray achieved a score of 50% or higher, making them eligible for university admission. This contrasts with earlier country-wide results, where only 3% of the 896,520 students who took final exams in Grade 12 achieved a score above 50%.

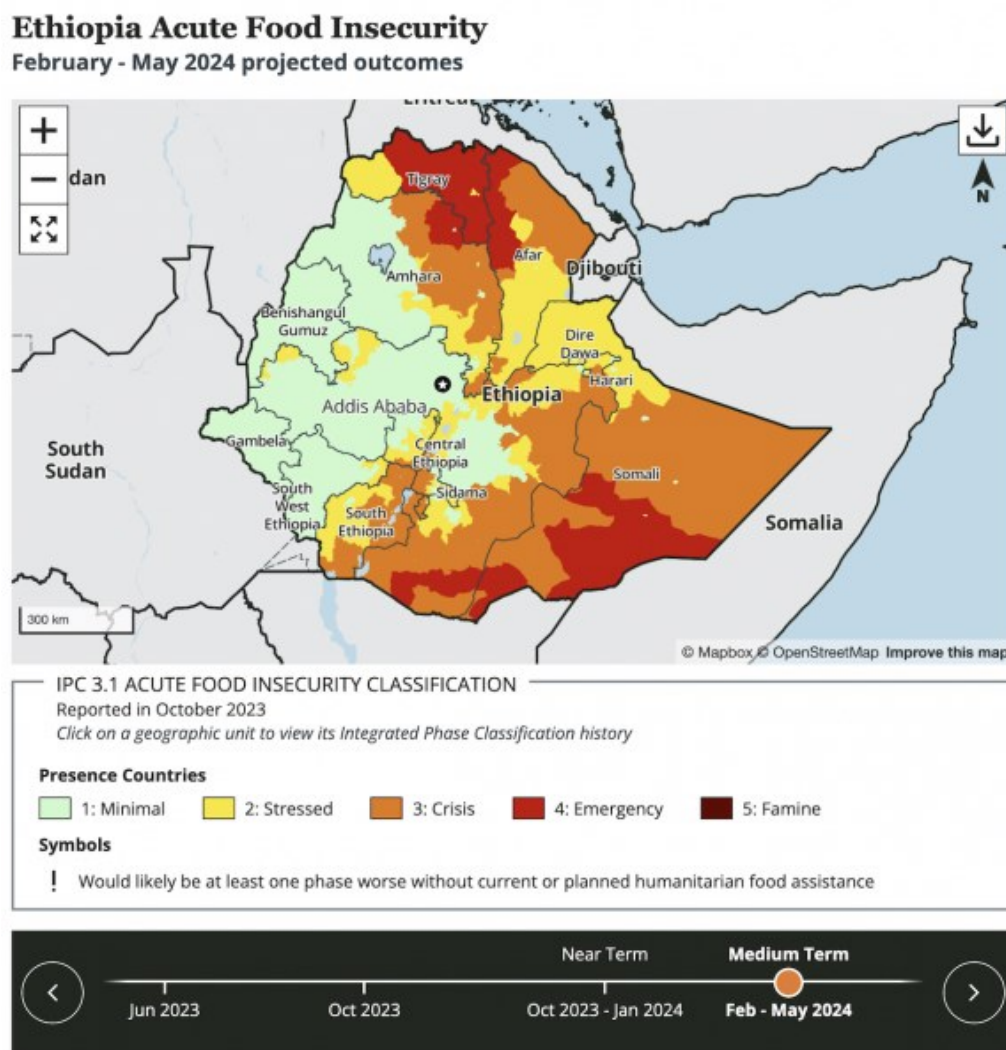
Addis Standard, 9 November 2023: [Defiance and resilience: What explains the unexpected results for 12th-Grade exams in post-war Tigray region](#)

## 7. Other news items and opinion pieces

- OHCHR, 17 November 2023: [Ethiopia: Violence in Amhara region](#)
- Ethio Chronicles, 22 November 2023: [Addis Ababa University Declines to Investigate and Revoke Abiy Ahmed PHD \[62% Plagiarism\] due to Fear.](#)
- BBC, 31 October 2023: [Facebook's algorithms 'supercharged' hate speech in Ethiopia's Tigray conflict](#)
- Alex De Waal: [How the Israel-Hamas war is destabilizing the Horn of Africa](#) (Responsible Statecraft)

## Digest 62.      **Acute food insecurity (26 January 2024)**

Again sad news in this digest: the developing famine (section 1), the overall situation in Ethiopia (section 2), war drums (section 3), the world forgetting the Tigray War (section 4). On the positive side, we wish to highlight a fund-raising initiative of the Tigray Disaster Relief Fund – especially directed at Tigrinya music lovers (section 6).



*Acute food insecurity in Ethiopia as reported by IPC (screenshot by [MO\\* Magazine](#))*

### 1. Famine in Tigray and Ethiopia

Since months, local people and media as well as the interim government in Tigray warned for upcoming famine again. Belgian journalist Tom Claes reported from the ground: [“‘The land is dead’: once again, millions of Ethiopians are on the brink of famine”](#). That article is the second part of a Tigray series by MO\*, the leading Belgian magazine with global news. (First part of the series: [‘Everything that held us together as a people is now in ruins’](#))

**As an example, on 24 January, the Mekelle branch of the Ethiopian Ombudsman Institution reported about their survey in 5 IDP camps where they found that 900 people had died due to starvation.**

On 14 December already, former BBC journalist [Martin Plaut highlighted the report of the Famine Early Warning System](#): “In early 2024, with the likely early start to the lean season in northern Ethiopia, household food stocks are depleted and poor households are expected to rely on income-generating activities to afford food; however, income from sources like firewood/charcoal sales, labor, petty trading, and livestock are expected to remain low. This will drive a resurgence of wider spread **Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes in many areas of Tigray and northeastern Amhara.**”

**And Martin Griffiths (UN Relief Coordinator) tweeted on 19 January: "The drought in northern Ethiopia is hitting communities hard, especially those yet to recover from two years of conflict. Time is of the essence. We have a short window of opportunity to prevent further deterioration with more funds and an urgent scale-up of the response. "**

**See also:**

- Alex De Waal: [Ethiopia starvation: Fear of famine in Tigray grows](#) (BBC News, 24 January 2024)
- BBC World Service radio: [A world-leading expert on famine is raising the alarm of a food crisis in Ethiopia](#)
- Le Monde, 2 January 2024: [Le spectre de la famine de retour en Ethiopie : « La vie des habitants est indescriptible au Tigré »](#) [in French] ([Famine returns to Ethiopia: “The life of the people of Tigray is indescribable”](#))
- TV Slovenia, 17 January 2024: [V nekaj etiopskih mestih v Tigraju od julija zaradi lakote umrlo več kot 200 ljudi - Vlada v Adis Abebi grožnja lakote zanika](#) [in Slovenian] (In just a few cities in Tigray in Ethiopia, since July more than 200 people have died of starvation - the government in Addis Ababa denies the threat of hunger)
- Radio France, 17 January 2024: [Éthiopie : habitants et médecins alertent sur une famine aussi grave qu'en 1984, le gouvernement nie](#) [radio broadcast, in French] (Ethiopia: Residents and doctors warn of famine as severe as in 1984, government denies)
- Panorama Nyheter, 19 January 2024: [Sult-alarm i Nord-Etiopia, regjeringen benekter krisen](#) [in Norwegian] (Hunger alert in northern Ethiopia, government denies crisis)
- Deutsche Welle, 14 January 2023: [Ethiopia's Tigray region on 'brink of famine'](#)
- Al Jazeera, 18 December 2023: [Starvation in Ethiopia: Officials blame fall in food aid for deaths](#)
- Globe & Mail, 27 December 2023: [In northern Ethiopia, a new famine could rival the worst of the past](#)
- Mulugeta Gebregziabher, Patrick Wight, Lyla Mehta: [Global action is needed to stop the unfolding famine in Tigray](#) (Ethiopia Insight)

## **2. Overall situation in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia's economy is in severe shape due to warfare, 30% annual inflation, a lack of hard currency and rising external debt obligations. The black market is flourishing and actual wages have dropped significantly. This is also reflected in low international credibility ([downgrading by the rating agencies](#)).



Yet, PM [Abiy Ahmed intends to build a national palace](#) and opulent mansions for his top officials on Entoto Hills near Addis Ababa, a costly monument to himself that will cost more than 9 billion euros, despite the country's severe resource shortage.

A colleague who recently returned from Addis said that taxi drivers and several of his academic counterparts openly make fun of Abiy. Each month, prices are rising dramatically. Huge sums of money are being spent on pointless projects to enhance Addis's external look, such as demolishing slums and importing mature exotic trees that are then decorated with lights.

Logically, the growing economic crisis and disparity causes widespread chaos in society. An Ethiopian colleague mentions that as the days go by, the situation in the country gets worse and worse. Because of the restrictions, he is unable to travel to Bahir Dar. Everywhere, criminality is on the rise. For instance, his wife was abducted for several hours in Addis. She was forced to transfer a sizable sum of money from her banking app to the abductor's account after having her hands and clothes sprayed with a chemical, thought to be [scopolamine](#) aka Devil's Breath. Police said she is fortunate not to have been killed. Once more, my acquaintance maintains that there is no more law in modern Ethiopia. According to the police officers, kidnappings are becoming more frequent, and bank employees are occasionally complicit in the crime by giving information to criminals outside. However, it can get worse if your bus gets stopped in certain OLF and *fano* districts in Addis, and you are on the wrong side. In Oromia region, there are a mass of [kidnappings for ransom](#).

Several Ethiopians told me that, this time around, Tigray is relatively the safest place in Ethiopia, but there is famine and power struggles.

#### Further reading:

- Reuters, 14 December 2023: [Fitch downgrades Ethiopia further into junk territory as default looms](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 8 December 2023: [A new palace for Ethiopia's prime minister brings evictions and dissent in a country beset by hunger and war](#)
- Het Laatste Nieuws, 4 January 2024: [Ethiopië is blut, ontvangt VN-hulp en bouwt een waanzinnig paleis van... tien miljard dollar](#) [in Dutch] (Ethiopia is broke, receives UN aid and builds an insane ten-billion-dollar palace)
- The Guardian, 23 January 2024: [‘This is a pandemic’: Ethiopia’s Oromia region gripped by surge in kidnappings](#)

### 3. The Nobel Peace Prize holder is still on the war path

The prime minister of Ethiopia gets involved in conflicts with neighboring countries and intends to construct a naval facility on the Red Sea shores. Also, thanks to the Nobel Peace Prize, non-Ethiopians have received the highest Ethiopian honor for the first time—in this case, the Turkish [drone manufacturer Baykar for its role in the Tigray war](#).

- BBC, 2 January 2024: [Ethiopia signs agreement with Somaliland paving way to sea access](#)
- BBC, 2 January 2024: [Somalia calls Ethiopia-Somaliland agreement act of aggression](#)
- Mulugeta Gebrehiwot: [Tigray in the Eye of the Storm](#) (World Peace Foundation)
- Anadolu Agency, 21 January 2024: [Ethiopia says Red Sea access deal with Somaliland not 'assumption of sovereignty' over any state](#)
- Ethiopia Peace Observatory [Weekly Update \(18 January 2024\)](#)
- The Defense Post, 19 January 2024: [Ethiopia Inducts Turkish Drones, Russian-Made Su-30 Fighter Jets](#)
- Mohamed El-Bendary: [Rising Somalia-Ethiopia tensions could plunge the Horn of Africa into chaos](#) (EuroNews)

#### 4. The War the World forgot

See this overview of the Tigray war by the Geographical Magazine (11 January 2024): [Tigray: the war the world forgot](#).

The [PRIO Annual Peace Address 2023 was given by Nima Elbagir](#), CNN's Chief Investigative Correspondent. 20 January 2024. Nima Elbagir provides an explanation of why the Tigray War went largely unnoticed: because of a total blackout that left the region without internet, telecommunications, or electricity, journalists were unable to give the narrative a human face. There was also a well-organised Russian-backed disinformation campaign disguised as anti-imperialism or pan-Africanism, with millions of online messages of hate. Journalists were barred from entering Tigray, arrested, and denied passage. Not to mention, there was apathy and indifference on the part of global powers. Watch the [video of Nima Elbagir's conference here](#), with her statements on the Tigray war starting at 22:00 in the video.

#### Further reading:

- BBC Sport, 6 December 2023: Ethiopia's Tigray war: [Athlete deaths among devastating impact on sport](#)
- The Reporter, 20 January 2024: [Tigray voids wartime property transactions](#)
- Some titles from Africa Intelligence (behind paywall)
  - 18 January 2024: [AU peace and security council forced to cancel Tigray trip](#)
  - 5 December 2023: [Ethiopian government fails to reinstate officers purged during Tigray war](#)
- Addis Standard, 19 December 2023: [Tigray's tug of war: The quest for recovery amidst power struggles](#)
- London Review of Books, 25 January 2024: ["Incapable of Sustaining Weeds"](#), extensive review of the book "Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War" by Martin Plaut and Sarah Vaughan.
- The LRB podcast, 25 January 2024: [War in Tigray](#)
- UN News, 28 December 2023: [Ethiopia: Prioritize victims amidst legacy of rights abuses, UN office urges](#)

- Addis Standard, 22 January 2024: [IDPs in Tigray rally for repatriation, urging proper implementation of the Pretoria agreement](#)
- MO\*, 25 January 2024: [Geen geld, geen medicijnen, geen hoop in conflictgebied Tigray](#) [in Dutch] (No money, no medicine, no hope in Tigray conflict zone)

## 5. New scientific publications

- Stephen Johnson, Frans Bongers, 2024. [Armed conflict as an underappreciated driver of conservation outcomes in frankincense \(\*Boswellia spp.\*\)](#). *Trees, Forests and People*, 15: 100490
- Tefera, A.S., Siyum, Z.G., Berhe, D.H. *et al.*, 2024. [Impact of climate variability and environmental policies on vegetation dynamics in the semi-arid Tigray](#). *Discov Environ* 2, 6.
- AGU23 – Annual meeting of the American Geosciences Union – [6 presentations and posters](#) related to the impacts of the Tigray War on agriculture and environment (December 2023 – January 2024)
- Aregawi Gebreyesus , Afewerki Tesfahunegn Niguse, Fiyori Shishay, Liya Mamo, Teklit Gebremedhin, Kahsu Tsegay, Asqual Gebreslasie Gebremariam, Kokob Gebru Kidanu, Solomon Gidey, and Fisaha Tesfay, 2024. [Prevalence of depression and associated factors among community hosted internally displaced people of Tigray; during war and siege](#). *BMC psychiatry* 24(1): 3.
- Mjaaland, T., 2024. [‘Self-reliant’ Refugees as ‘Development Actors’: Dignity or Disavowal of Responsibility? The Case of Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia](#). *Forum for Development Studies*. Routledge.
- Muiyiwa M., 2024: [Fragile Democracy: Media Freedom and Radical Polarisation in Ethiopia](#). Media Watch. 2024 Jan 3:09760911231215642.
- NEW BOOK – John Young, 2024: [The Poisoned Chalice of US Democracy: Studies from the Horn of Africa](#). Bloomsbury.
- NEW BOOK – Haggai Erlich, 2024: [Greater Tigray and the Mysterious Magnetism of Ethiopia](#). Hurst.

## 6. ወገኑ ይገዛል/ Wegihudo Gena/ Is it not yet dawn?

Qrap’s latest album, ‘Is It Dawn Yet?’ is a poignant 10-track collection serving as a heartfelt love letter to Tigray. Collaborating with the Tigray Disaster Relief Fund, Qrap pledges 100% of the album's sales until January 30, 2024 to support the resilient people of Tigray, making this musical endeavor a meaningful contribution to a crucial cause. [Click here for more information and donations](#).

And this video clip of Euronews stayed under the radar since August: [Tigrayan women celebrate the Ashenda festival in Addis Ababa](#)

## Digest 63. Eyewitness reports directly from Tigray (20 February 2024)

The European Parliament joint committee on foreign affairs, development and human rights recently discussed the situation in Ethiopia; several experts and representatives of EU institutions participated in the meeting. See this video recording of about one hour duration:

European Parliament, 13 February 2024: [Session on Ethiopia](#) - Joint committee on Foreign Affairs and committee on Development and subcommittee on Human Rights.

Further, in this Tigray Digest, we bring several detailed testimonies directly from Tigray (section 1). Our contacts on the ground tell us that famine is so bad in all villages; yet there is an unexpected FAO medal for Abiy Ahmed (section 2). One way of supporting the school children is through Mary's Meals (section 3). The other big problem is that large parts of Tigray are still occupied by Amhara Fano and the Eritrean army (section 4). In fact, there is now war and massacres in Amhara and other Ethiopian regions (section 5). Would the ongoing AU summit continue to cover Ethiopia with regard to its multiple wars and large-scale killings and starvation (section 6)?

We wind up with the references of nine new scientific publications related to various aspects of the Tigray War (section 7), nine opinion pieces (section 8) and a few other media articles (section 9).

### 1. Testimonies directly from Tigray

- MO\*, 8 February 2024: [Exodus en interne onvrede na het vredesakkoord in Tigray - 'Ik schaam me om mijn Ethiopische paspoort'](#) [in Dutch] ([Exodus and internal discontent after the Tigray peace agreement - 'I am ashamed of my Ethiopian passport'](#))
- MO\*, 25 January 2024: [Geen geld, geen medicijnen, geen hoop in conflictgebied Tigray](#) [in Dutch] (No money, no medicine, no hope in Tigray conflict zone)
- Ethiopia Insight, 30 January 2024: [Four years later, Tigray is unrecognizable](#)
- "Sabbatical", 16 January 2024. [Visiting Tigray, The Worst War You've Never Heard Of](#) (a 30' video report with 313k views so far)
- [Magazine of the Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide](#). It is in Tigrinya mostly. Caution: it contains some horrific photos
- Documentary film "[Speaking the Unspeakable: In the Aftermath of weaponised rape in Tigray, North-Ethiopia](#)" by Norwegian social anthropologist and filmmaker Thera Mjaaland and Tigrayan journalist Kibrom Mebrahtom ([Vimeo](#), no login required)
- Ethiopia Reporter, 17 February 2024. ["Heartbreaking": Parliamentarians sound alarm over deteriorating conditions in Tigray](#)

### 2. Famine and an unexpected FAO medal for Abiy Ahmed

- Associated Press, 30 January 2024: [Millions Urgently Need Food in Ethiopia's Tigray Region Despite Resumption of Aid Deliveries](#)
- Geographical, 26 January 2024: [Drought, conflict and politics leads to fear of famine in Ethiopia](#)

- Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman, 30 January 2024. [Press release in Amharic](#). This Ethiopian institution calls both federal and regional governments to order with regards to the famine in Tigray, including on inconsistent reporting.
- The New Humanitarian, 13 February 2024: [Aid glitches and funding shortfalls increase famine fears in Tigray](#)
- Addis Standard, 12 February 2024: [Urgent humanitarian crisis unfolds at Jara IDP center in North Wollo Zone, leaving thousands without food aid for over two months](#)
- Martin Plaut, 14 February 2024: [New Live Aid Musical launched: Ethiopian are starving once more](#)
- BNN, 15 February 2024: [Starvation in Tigray: The Unseen Battle, Celebrity Controversy, and Live Aid's Legacy](#)
- BBC, 5 February 2024: [Ethiopia: UK warns of food crisis triggered by war and drought](#)
- BBC, 14 February 2024: [Ethiopia on the brink: Fears of a famine return and why you should pay attention](#)
- The Guardian, 9 February 2024: [‘At the door of death’: desperation in Ethiopia as hunger crisis deepens](#)
- Trouw, 5 February 2024: [Mislukte oogsten en gestaakte voedselhulp: na oorlog nu hongersnood in Tigray](#) [in Dutch] ([Crop failures and food aid stopped: after war, now famine in Tigray](#))

Some readers asked me how food aid is being distributed in Tigray by now. Here’s the view from a local NGO staff on the ground: “For the past two weeks, I have been a data collector for a non-profit organization in two *tabiyas* (municipalities). I gathered all the data for 2484 homes, but they have chosen 552 of those to get food assistance. However, nearly everyone in these two *tabiyas* is hungry and at risk. Instead, they should help everyone at first, and then after that focus on households that require more assistance.” Another friend, involved with the NGO sector writes: “There is simply not enough money to give food to everyone. It's not the humanitarian actors that are responsible for that but the donors who are funding them. The humanitarian actors then have a choice - either they give food but very little to everyone; or they try to screen the neediest. Both options are incredibly problematic. There’s a problem with screening, but there's also a problem with the other option. If you give only very little food to everyone including the neediest, the neediest will not have enough and die. It is a huge dilemma which is created by not enough money in the system”.

- Avvenire, 31 January 2024: [La siccità uccide l'Etiopia del nord: 372 morti di fame in sei mesi](#) [in Italian] (Drought kills northern Ethiopia: 372 starvation deaths in six months)
- Associated Press, 30 January 2024: [Nearly 400 Ethiopians have died of starvation recently. Millions more need food aid](#)

It should be noted that the 372, 400 or 1400 deaths reported by the media only concern a small number of *woredas* (districts), in which the most obvious cases are documented, and not the actual number of famine deaths in Tigray.

Yet, there is one square mile in Addis Ababa where people live in a different world, see this [video released today by the office of the Prime Minister](#) (peplum music included).

In this context, a prime example of cynicism came from FAO Director-General Qi Dongyu on January 30, in Rome, where he awarded the Agricola Medal to Abiy Ahmed “for his efforts to combat hunger”. Our sources within the FAO advised that, despite the opposition of many of their colleagues, it was primarily the Chinese and Italian officials at the FAO who insisted on giving Abiy this medal.

- Human Rights Watch, 30 January 2024: [UN Food Award for Ethiopia’s Premier Ignores Wartime Abuses - Millions of Ethiopians Currently Facing Food Insecurity](#)
- Addis Standard, 29 January 2024: [PM Abiy’s FAO award sparks mixed reactions, draws criticism to the UN agency](#)
- Il Manifesto, 28 January 2024: [Abiy Ahmed a Roma per ricostruirsi un’immagine](#) [in Italian] (Abiy Ahmed in Rome to rebuild his image)

### **3. Schools in Tigray**

Mary’s Meals launches a call to support schools in Tigray: “The war has undone years of progress in Tigray’s education system. For now, there is an urgent dual priority – ensuring that children in Tigray have food and boosting their chances of engaging with education again”. See: <https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/campaigns/crisis-in-ethiopia>

The Regional Education Bureau [calls for a massive scale-up of the school feeding programme](#), which is crucial to prevent students from dropping out from schools.

#### **Further reading:**

- Addis Standard, 14 February 2024: [Desperate Times: Students in Tigray region desert schools amid drought-induced hunger](#)
- BNN, 14 February 2024: [Children in Crisis: The Unseen Victims of the Tigray Conflict](#)
- Addis Standard, 26 January 2024: [High school students in Tigray to continue with old curriculum despite nationwide adoption of new syllabus](#)

### **4. Parts of Tigray still occupied by Amhara Fano and Eritrean army**

- Addis Standard, 9 February 2024: [PM Abiy, Tigray Interim admin meet in wake of differences on ‘referendum’, drought response](#)
- Addis Standard, 13 February 2024: [Referendum in Western Tigray not feasible amidst demographic changes, persistent displacement: Tigray interim admin](#)
- VOA, 2 February 2024: [Eritrean Troops Accused of Abducting Farmers, Stealing Livestock in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- Addis Standard, 30 January 2024: [Thousands fleeing Western Tigray seek refuge in Endabaguna town as hunger, persecution rise](#)
- Addis Standard, 6 February 2024: [Tigray interim admin responds to federal government’s earlier statement, labels it ‘premature’ for release ahead of scheduled deliberations](#) (this relates to statements on Western Tigray)

- RANE Worldview, 14 February 2024: [Ethiopia: Western Tigray Referendum Stalls Over Demographic Changes](#)
- There has been noise on social media that fighting would have resumed in Southern Tigray, part of which is still occupied by Amhara troops. Our contacts on the ground mention that there was a brief clash between militias from both sides around Chercher; it stopped after the intervention of the ENDF and the zone administration from the Tigray side.

## 5. War and massacres in Amhara and other Ethiopian regions

- Addis Standard, 13 February 2024: [For the control of Kola Shara: Armed insurgency simmer in Ethiopia's youngest regional state](#) (fighting and killings near Arba Minch)
- Reuters, 3 February 2024: [Residents say Ethiopian soldiers kill more than 50 civilians in Amhara town](#)
- Addis Standard, 13 February 2024: [Rights Commission prelim report confirms extrajudicial killing of dozens by security forces in Amhara state](#)
- Addis Standard, 15 February 2024: [Ethiopian government denies reports of extrajudicial killings in Merawi town, Amhara region amid domestic, international outcry](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 16 February 2024: [Fano rebels register lobbyist in US](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 31 January 2024: [Agew rebels split in Amhara after failed mediation bid](#)

## 6. AU summit and Ethiopia

- Africa Intelligence, 15 February 2024: [AU summit set to ignore continent's conflicts and political crises](#) (Open Access article)
- AlJazeera, 9 February 2024: [It is high time the AU takes a firm stance against Ethiopia's aggressions](#) (opinion Tafi Mhaka)
- AlJazeera, 14 February 2024: [Addis summit raises questions about AU's muted stance on Ethiopia rifts](#)
- YouTube: [Ethiopia PM Delivers a speech at AU 37th Summit](#)

## 7. Scientific publications

- Gebremichael, M.W., Gebremariam, B., Mitiku, M., Hadush, Z., Tesfay, B., Gerezgiher, A. and Alemu, M.G., 2023. [Rape survivors' experience in Tigray: a qualitative study](#). *BMC women's health*, 23(1), p.372.
- Fiseha, Assefa. (2023). [Tigray: A Nation in Search of Statehood?](#). *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*. 30. 1-45.
- Abbay, Alem. (2023). [State-Building/State-Destroying in Ethiopia – A Backdrop to the Tigray Genocide](#). *Afrika Tanulmányok / Hungarian Journal of African Studies*. 16. 95-116.
- Mjaaland, T., 2024. [‘Self-reliant’ Refugees as ‘Development Actors’: Dignity or Disavowal of Responsibility? The Case of Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia](#). In *Forum for Development Studies* (pp. 1-23). Routledge.



- Asgedom AA, Etsedingl A, Hailemariam TT, Tequare MH, Hailu T, Tsegay AT, Hailu AG, Weldebirhan SN, Hailu M, Weldesenbet NA, Fisseha G, Alemayehu Y., 2023. [Prevalence, causes and outcomes of war-related civilian injuries in Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region: a community-based descriptive study](#). BMC Res Notes. 16(1):352.
- Eliab Taye: [Ethiopia's Pivot from Institutionalised Regional Diplomacy to Populist Peacemaking: Abiy Ahmed's 2019 Khartoum Peace Initiative and Its Impact on Ethiopia-Sudan Relations](#) – Research Report - The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, The University of Edinburgh
- Abera, B.T., Teka, H., Berhe, E. *et al.*, 2024. [Assessment of adverse events among healthcare workers following the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). *Sci Rep* **14**, 3255 (2024).
- Martha Geiger: [Donkeys are unsung heroes in Ethiopia's humanitarian crisis – and they could do even more with better support](#) (The Conversation)
- Tsadik, M., Gebretnsae, H., Ayalew, A., Asgedom, A.A., Gebreyesus, A., Hagos, T., Abrha, M., Weldegerima, K., Abrha, B., Gebre, G. and Hagos, M., 2023. [Child health services and armed conflict in Tigray, North Ethiopia: a community-based study](#). *Conflict and health*, 17(1), p.47.

## 8. Opinion pieces

- Teklehaymanot Weldemichel & Birhan Gebrekirstos, 26 January 2024. [How targeting Tigray farmers has contributed to brink of famine](#) (Devex)
- The International Affairs Review, 23 January 2024: [Applying a Gender Lens to Transitional Justice After Ethiopia's Tigray War](#)
- John Young, 6 February 2024: [Homegrown democratic reforms are the only solution to Ethiopia's woes](#)
- Ismail D. Osman: [Ethiopia's Domestic Turmoil and the Prospect of Conflict with Somalia](#) (Modern Diplomacy)
- Hambisa Belina: [Is Ethiopia's disintegration an inevitable and necessary evil?](#) (Ethiopia Insight)
- Faisal Roble: [Horn of Africa: Averting more conflicts and crisis](#) (Addis Standard)
- Jason Mosley: [Ethiopia's Quest for Sea Access and the Question of Somali Sovereignty](#) (African Arguments)
- Israel Ojoko: [Tigray Killing Sparks Doubt on Abiy Ahmed's Peace Initiatives](#) (BNN)
- Newsweek, 2 February 2024: [Tigray Is Still in Crisis—The Guns Have Stopped, but Hunger Abounds](#) | Opinion Sarah Miller (Refugees International)

## 9. Other media articles

- Africa Intelligence, 14 February 2024. [IMF considers backing new Ethiopian liberalisation plan](#) (The IMF is understood to be ready to back a new Ethiopian economic reform plan, which, among other things, will open up the retail distribution sector to foreign investors.)
- Addis Standard, 12 February 2024: [Canadian Sun Peak Metals set to resume exploration at Shire project site in Tigray](#)
- VRT, 18 February 2024: [Waarom politiek in Eritrea op straat in Den Haag wordt uitgevochten](#) [in Dutch] (Why politics in Eritrea is being fought out on the streets of The Hague)

## Digest 64. Professor Meareg who was killed in Bahir Dar finally laid to rest in Aksum (18 March 2024)



*Scenes from Professor Meareg's burial in Leto near Aksum*

In this digest we highlight again the famine in Tigray (section 1) and the victims of the Tigray war (section 2). Professor Meareg Abraha of Bahir Dar University is one of these victims; he recently was buried in his home village, more than two years after his murder (section 3). We also discuss deforestation in Ethiopia in section 4. The last parts include a set of recent studies related to the war in Tigray (section 5), media items (section 6) and opinion pieces (section 7).

### 1. Famine in Tigray

On 11 March, the leading French newspaper “Le Monde” published an Editorial about the Tigray famine. The newspaper concludes that “The famine raging in Tigray, and [Abiy] Ahmed's denial of it, is yet another symptom of a drift against which the international community should be mobilizing. In Ethiopia, as elsewhere, the repeating of historical tragedies is not inevitable. In this vast country, which needs to reconcile all its demographic groups, no lasting peace can be built by humiliating one part of the population, let alone by turning a blind eye to the flagrant humanitarian tragedy it is suffering.”

- Le Monde, 11 March 2024. Editorial: [Ethiopia's hidden famine needs national and global attention](#). (In French: [Ethiopie : alerte à la famine cachée](#))
- Le Monde, 11 March 2024: [Famine in Ethiopia's Tigray has become a political battle](#) (with direct reporting from Felegweyni in Eastern Tigray). (In French: [En Ethiopie, la famine au Tigré, une bataille politique](#))
- Nic Cheeseman, Yohannes Woldemariam: [PM Abiy Ahmed's self-made famine stalks Ethiopia](#) (The Africa Report)

- Refugees International, 29 February 2024: [Scars of War and Deprivation: An Urgent Call to Reverse Tigray's Humanitarian Crisis](#) – Excerpt from p. 5: (from p.5) "The Tigray Bureau of Health indicated that 60 percent of households have moderate or severe hunger, compared to just 3 percent before the war. Ironically, this rate is now even higher than during the war – when Tigrayans lived under siege – which saw a rate of around 36 percent." One of my contacts on the ground confirmed as follows: "Yes, it is right. It is affecting almost everybody, even those farmers who were in a relatively better position in terms of food (in)security during the all-round blockage."
- World Food Programme, 5 March 2024 : [In Ethiopia, WFP's new digital system tracks and delivers to people facing severe hunger](#)
- Deutsche Welle, 22 February 2024: [How sustainable farming could help Ethiopian farmers](#)
- Atlas News, 20 February 2024: [Starvation in Tigray: A Dive into Ethiopia's Forgotten North](#)
- Associated Press, 10 March 2024: [Ethiopian Children in Tigray Struggle with Hunger](#)
- Mary's Meals, 12 March 2024: [Ethiopia's Largely Unreported Hunger Crisis is an Unfolding Catastrophe](#)
- ABC News, 10 March 2024: [Ethiopia's Tigray region is now peaceful, but extreme hunger afflicts its children](#)

## 2. The victims of the Tigray war

The Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide has published "Ts'inta", a report in English. [Click here to download the PDF](#). Warning: some of the content may contain descriptions of extreme sexual violence or graphic imagery.

Upcoming webinar co-organised by Every Casualty Counts and the Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL) on "[Casualty Recording in Central Africa](#)" (CAR and DRC), **Wednesday March 27<sup>th</sup>, 14h GMT**. Though not directly related to Tigray or Ethiopia, the webinar is important for the casualty recording approach. [Follow this link for registration](#).

### Further reading

- BNN, 22 February 2024: [In the Shadow of Conflict: Ethiopia's Tigray Women Confront Violence Amid Calls for Justice](#)
- Addis Standard, 19 February 2024: [Experts highlight outstanding issues as Ethiopia takes a step towards transitional justice](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 5 March 2024: [‘Horrific’ civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies](#)
- Reuters, 23 February 2024: [In Ethiopia, a secret committee orders killings and arrests to crush rebels](#)
- The New Statesman, 27 February 2024: [The forgotten wars - This century's deadliest conflicts aren't taking place in Ukraine or Gaza](#)
- De Standaard, 22 February 2024: [Twee jaar na Tigray-conflict is Ethiopië opnieuw decor van burgeroorlog: "Iedereen wordt gevisieerd"](#) [in Dutch] (Two years after the Tigray conflict, Ethiopia is once again the scene of civil war: "Everyone is being targeted")

- Le Monde, 11 March 2024: [En Ethiopie, « mourir ou être violées », le calvaire de milliers de femmes durant l'occupation de la province rebelle du Tigré](#) [in French] ([In Tigray, Ethiopian women face horrific choice: 'To die or to be raped'](#))
- Nation (Kenya), 14 March 2024: [Tigray war: Horror of women infected with HIV to reduce target population](#)
- Julia Duncan-Cassell, Kokob Gebru Kidanu, Filsan Abdi, David Alton, Sally Keeble, and Mirjam van Reisen: [UN Commission Asked To Focus On 'Horrific Violence' Against Women In Tigray War](#) – OpEd (EurasiaReview)
- Addis Standard, 9 March 2024: [Amid allegations of extrajudicial killings, more than 200 Tigrayan ex-ENDF soldiers languish in prison, families cry out for justice](#)

### 3. More than two years after his murder, Professor Meareg Amare finally laid to rest

Prof. Meareg Amare, of Tigrayan origin, was murdered by Amhara militias in front of his house in Bahir Dar on 3 November 2021. Before the killing, there had been a hate campaign on a Facebook account called [BDU Staff](#) directed at the professor. Prof. Meareg's body was recently recovered from Bahir Dar and transferred for formal burial in his home village. This is how it went, quoted after his son, Abraham Meareg:

"Excavating the unmarked graveyard of our father near the elusive Medhaniealem Church at Bahir Dar has been a perilous endeavor, fraught with immediate physical dangers. The dense overgrowth of bushes and the presence of other unidentified graveyards made it difficult to pinpoint the exact location. However, with the assistance of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission diligent investigations and interviews were made with government authorities, municipal officials, police, and individuals involved in the burial process, the site has been successfully marked. This collaborative effort not only sheds light on the clandestine nature of the burial but also underscores the importance of uncovering the truth and seeking justice."

"With the invaluable assistance of devoted individuals and unknown relatives within the city, a daring mission was executed under the veil of secrecy to retrieve our father from his grave in the dead of night in February 2022. Amidst utmost security precautions, these faithful souls clandestinely carried out the operation, ensuring that our father was reclaimed from the place where he had been hastily buried."

"Despite our family's effort with the Amharans to build a mausoleum at the Dibanke St. John Church in the city, we were disheartened to find that they never extended a helping hand or sought to support us. Instead, they were tragically swayed by unfounded hatred and misinformation. Faced with this betrayal, we resolved to honor our father's memory in our own way. We carefully secured his body in a box and embarked on the construction of a standard three-block mausoleum in his home village, with the intention of laying him to rest alongside his parents in the family church, Leto Mariyam near Aksum. This decision was not just a practical one but also a deeply personal and symbolic gesture, reclaiming our agency and heritage in the face of adversity."

“Following meticulous arrangements, we managed to transport our father on March 2nd, 2024 to Bahir Dar Airport, to board him onto a flight to Addis Ababa, and the subsequent day, to Shire. Against all odds, we were able to lay our father's body to rest in the place where he truly belongs—home.”

“As we speak our [Professor Maereg’s family] house in Bahir Dar is still controlled by Amhara militants who use it as a military camp and we never got a statement from the University.”

See also Abrham Meareg’s Facebook posts:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=936205621370357>

With regard to the lawsuit against Meta, see the most recent update:

BBC Sounds, 11 March 2024. A professor is murdered in Ethiopia. His son believes that Meta is partly responsible. [Podcast](#).

#### **4. Ethiopia and deforestation**

A recent article by Africa Intelligence mentions that Ethiopia [seeks to soften the EU stance on deforestation](#). The EU wants to ban the importation of coffee cultivated in recently cleared forests. Ethiopia simply cites traceability as the main obstacle. Small farms that are less than two hectares in size are typically used to cultivate coffee, and the EU only requires geolocation data in single-point form for these types of plantations. Yet, with regard to deforestation for coffee, we saw "business as usual" during our most recent trip to southern Ethiopia (2019): when the price of coffee grows, more forests are opened up for the planting of coffee.

See this article: [Addis Ababa seeks to soften EU stance on deforestation](#) - It is behind a paywall, full text available upon request.

Some of us may recall Abiy Ahmed’s media appearances about the Green Legacy Initiative, claiming billions of trees planted. The number of seedlings [purportedly planted seemed implausible](#), and then there is still the issue of tree survival rates. Ethiopia is currently trying to soften the EU's stance on deforestation, which is more proof that all of this was a publicity stunt: how can one claim to have "regreened" a nation while impeding efforts to stop deforestation? Obviously, the Tigray war and military actions elsewhere in the country have not only led to an interruption of planting efforts, but also led to dire conditions for the population, which again resorted to firewood, in addition to the direct damage by warfare.

#### **Further reading**

- BBC, 19 November 2022: [Ethiopia's 20-billion tree goal - a sapling success?](#)
- Solomon Hishe et al., 2024: [The impacts of armed conflict on vegetation cover degradation, Tigray, northern Ethiopia](#). (International Soil and Water Conservation Research).



- Emnet Negash et al., 2024: [Remote sensing reveals how armed conflict regressed woody vegetation cover and ecosystem restoration efforts in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). (Science of Remote Sensing).

## 5. New scientific publications

- Abraha HE, Teka H, Legesse AY, Ebrahim MM, Tsadik M, et al. (2024) [Causes of death among women of reproductive age during the war in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). PLOS ONE 19(3): e0299650.
- Gebrslasie, K.Z., Berhe, G., Taddese, H., Weldemariam, S., Gebre, G., Amano, A., Birhane, D., Berihu, G., Kassa, M., Weldegebriel, M. and Haile, E., 2023. [One-year discontinuation among users of the contraceptive pill and injection in South East Tigray region, Ethiopia](#). *Plos one*, 18(5), p.e0285085.
- Legesse, A.Y., Hadush, Z., Teka, H., Berhe, E., Abera, B.T., Amdeselassie, F., Abraha, H.E., Gebre, D. and Bazzano, A.N., 2024. [Lived experience of healthcare providers amidst war and siege: a phenomenological study of Ayder Comprehensive Specialized Hospital of Tigray, Northern Ethiopia](#). *BMC Health Services Research*, 24(1), p.292.
- Thomas, C., 2023. [When Mao Misfires: A Military Appreciation of the Tigray Conflict](#). *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 22(3).
- Cheeseman, N., Swedlund, H.J. and O'Brien-Udry, C., 2024. [Foreign aid withdrawals and suspensions: Why, when and are they effective?](#). *World Development*, 178, p.106571.

## 6. Other media articles

- Addis Standard, 27 February 2024: [Tigray announces talks on Pretoria accord implementation will be conducted 'exclusively through AU panel'](#)
- NRC, 22 February 2024: [Het ging fout in Eritrea toen bevrijders de rol van politici op zich namen](#) [in Dutch] ([Things went wrong in Eritrea when the liberators took on the role of politicians](#))
- Le Monde, 1 March 2024: [French journalist detained in Ethiopia freed](#)
- Addis Standard, 27 February 2024: [A quarter million students face mass dropout amid unfolding drought induced starvation: Tigray Education Bureau](#)
- Addis Standard, 14 March 2024: [TPLF asserts 'erosion of trust' with federal gov't amid inadequate implementation of Pretoria deal](#)
- Ethiopian Business Review, 14 March 2024: [Grim Legacy of Tigray War Haunts Mekelle A City of Despair, Dreams of Escape](#)
- The Reporter Ethiopia, 13 March 2024: ["Unresolved territorial issues in Tigray could lead to resumption of conflict": US intelligence report](#)
- AFP, 14 March 2024. Fact check: [Images from Tigray war misleadingly linked to recent conflict in Amhara region](#)
- African Union, 13 March 2024: [African Union Honours the Team of African Experts Who Served Under the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission \(MVCM\) in Tigray](#) (our contacts on the ground in Tigray rather state that indeed these AU people driving up and down, but nobody knows what they are doing – in any case they did not contribute in bringing the Eritrean and Amhara forces back to their borders)

- Addis Standard, 11 March 2024: [Tigray interim admin announces demobilization of over 100,000 ex-combatants amid rehabilitation challenges](#)

## **7. Opinion pieces**

- Abdi Ismail Samatar: [Ethiopia on the edge — can Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed pull back from the abyss?](#) (Daily Maverick)
- Mehari Taddele: [Scorecard of the Implementation of the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities \(CoHA\)](#) (Addis Standard)



First of all, “Ts’inta”, a report by the Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide has recently been published in English – [you may access it through this link](#). (Warning: some of the content may contain descriptions of extreme sexual violence or graphic imagery).



*The abbot of Ts'ida Imba (Abune Mi'erawi Kristos) Monastery in Tigray looks at the small quantities of grain in the Monastery's storehouse, which will not suffice for even two weeks (Photo Joachim Persoon)*

This digest includes a report on the food situation in Tigray's monasteries (section 1), an example of the ongoing hunger crisis, in keeping with our practice of providing as much news as possible straight from the ground in Tigray. Further, we draw attention to a newly published scientific study on the ethnic cleansing of Western Tigray (section 2). In Southern Tigray, there is some progress, with the Tigray administration re-established in Korem, and Amhara forces that moved out from Alamata also (section 3). We further highlight a review article on the impacts of war on the environment (section 4), an article that builds upon lived experience during the Tigray War. In section 5, we cite two well-known editorialists who discuss how the world overlooks mass killing and suffering — particularly in Africa. Other opinion pieces about the Tigray war are contained in Section 6, while more scientific papers are referenced in Section 7.

## 1. Famine

Dr. Joachim Persoon, an Associate Professor at Addis Ababa University and Deacon of the Coptic Orthodox Church, is just back from a one-month stay at Tigrayan monasteries. He allowed us to summarize his field report.

The monks and nuns of Tigray are now threatened by an existential crisis, which could cause the abandonment of monasteries which have survived for generations under difficult conditions. Dr Persoon highlights the ongoing drought, the bad weather conditions just before harvest and the effects of the civil war which prevented normal agricultural activity, as well as the presence of a large population of displaced people. Joinly, all this has led to a situation of extreme food insecurity, which is particularly strongly felt in rural regions.

Prosecution by Amhara “fano” militias has caused the exile of monks in disputed border areas, especially about 1000 Tigrayan monks from Waldiba.

Most monasteries are centers for traditional education, hosting hundreds, even thousands of students, who struggle to obtain sufficient food to pursue their studies. The traditional method of begging for food from the surrounding population does not work when they themselves are impoverished and struggling to survive. Some of the traditional students I met were so thin and fragile looking, that I hesitated to touch them even to shake hands with them.

At the beginning of the great lent – fasting season, abbots of monasteries who should be focusing on spiritual activities, are obliged to spend most of their time begging for food from neighbouring urban communities to try to ensure the survival of their monastic communities. These communities follow a very ascetic life style, with extremely simple diet and long periods of abstinence. The further reduction of food resources creates life threatening circumstances.

By mid-April, the abbot of the Tsa’ida Imba (Abune Mi’erawi Kristos) Monastery informed that things were getting worse, they had no beans to make sauce (*tsebhi*), so they were eating dry injera.

The full report by Dr. Joachim Greger Persoon has been published by the Radboud University (The Netherlands): [Noodsituatie in kloosters in Tigray](#) [in Dutch] (Emergency in Tigray’s monasteries)

To understand the environment of the Waldiba monastery, see this paper, just out: Berhe DH, Retta AN, Tefera AS, Gidey T, Negussie A, Birhane E, Hadgu KM, Gebrehiwot K. [Ecological study and forest degradation of the Waldiba Monastery woodland in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). Discover Sustainability. 2024 Apr 4;5(1):57.

### Further reading on the Tigray famine

- The Independent, 6 April 2024: [Ethiopia’s cry for food falls on the world’s deaf ears](#) (with a very touching photo report, especially for those who know Tigray)
- Alex Dewaal, 22 March 2024: [Can we Compare Famines? Gaza, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tigray, Yemen](#)

- The Scotsman, 6 April 2024: Ethiopia hunger crisis: [‘The only option we have now is to wait for support, or die, because we don’t have anything to eat’](#), villagers say as Mary’s Meals warns of looming famine 'worse than the 1980s'
- Le Monde, 7 April 2024. [Forty years ago, the West discovered the images of the great Ethiopian famine](#)

## 2. Western Tigray

This recently published scientific article sheds more light on the ethnic cleansing of Western Tigray:

Merih Welay Welesilassie, Berhane Gerencheal, 2024. ["Only Amharic or Leave Quick!": Linguistic Genocide in the Western Tigray Region of Ethiopia](#). International Journal for the Semiotics of Law.

It appears that while the dirty work of massacres in Western Tigray was largely (but not exclusively) outsourced to the Fano irregulars, the forced amharanization of Western Tigrayans was implemented through the formal structures of the Amhara Regional administration.

From the abstract: “This research investigated the motives and means by which the Amhara Regional State-enforced a monolingual and monocultural language education policy in western Tigray through the lens of linguistic genocide. The study involved interviews with ten teachers, selected using a snowball sampling method, and document analysis to reinforce the result. Political and economic factors and a desire to promote the assimilation of Tigrayans into Amhara culture and language, a process known as "Amharanization", appear to have impacted the implementation of the language education policy in western Tigray. Authorities have implemented a variety of measures, including bans, restrictions, penalties, enforcement, forced relocation, and even heinous acts, which have caused the Tigrayan community severe physical and psychological distress. Collectively, these policies, actions, and outcomes constituted an act of linguistic genocide.”

### Further reading

- Addis Standard, 5 April 2024: [ENDF will assume the responsibility of safeguarding the peace and security of the areas adjacent to the Amhara and Tigray territories: Gov’t Communication Services](#) (the Nth promise...)
- Addis Standard, 25 March 2024: [Tigray interim admin accuses Amhara region of ‘incorporating Tigray lands in curriculum, maps’](#)

## 3. Eyewitnesses from Southern Tigray (Korem, Alamata)

Over the last weeks, there has been quite some tense diplomacy, leading to a gradual retreat of the Amhara administration from Southern Tigray. On 16 April, [Agenzia Nova summarized](#) what was in the media about these developments.

We reached out to several people in Alamata and Korem on 18 and 19 April and they mentioned that the reporting is overstated, especially concerning the assertion of a full-scale war between the opposing forces. While there was indeed a minor clash, it was brief.

The Amhara administration and their militias left Southern Tigray without fighting because they were forced to do so by the Ethiopian Army, acting on behalf of the Federal Government. Amhara militias had some clashes with the Ethiopian Army though on their way south, from Alamata to Kobo (in the Amhara region) and several Amhara officials, who previously administered Alamata, were killed in skirmishes with the ENDF (Ethiopian Army).

By 18 April, the Tigray forces and refugees remained in villages on the outskirts of Alamata, not yet getting into the town. The Federal police and ENDF were taking care of the security in Korem and Alamata. However, it was confirmed that the Amhara forces and administration have withdrawn from the town; they are fortifying their positions around small towns on the regional border such as Waja and Timuga. Alamata is now calm and there is no movement. On 19 April, we learned that the Tigray forces and administration are back in Korem town.

One of our correspondents states: “The whole ploy is related to the Pretoria agreement, though for us nothing is certain yet.”

#### **4. Impacts of war on the environment**

Hailemariam Meaza, Tesfaalem Ghebreyohannes, Nyssen, J., Zbelo Tesfamariam, Biadgilgn Demissie, Poesen, J., Misgina Gebrehiwot, Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel, Deckers, S., Desta Gebremichael Gidey, Vanmaercke, M., 2024. [Managing the environmental impacts of war: What can be learned from conflict-vulnerable communities?](#) Science of the Total Environment: 927: 171974. (IF = 9.8)

Highlights:

- The impact of the war on total environment has been overlooked in developing countries.
- 193 case studies worldwide reveal that the total environment has been “alone” during war.
- Deforestation and soil erosion are the most cited environmental impacts of warfare.
- Limited restoration efforts have been undertaken to reduce war-driven landscape impacts.
- Management practices of environmental resources during tension, active fighting and peace are shared.

The article builds upon the first author’s lived experience during the Tigray War. Indeed, Hailemariam Meaza conducted numerous field observations while on the run for the Tigray war in rural areas late 2020 and early 2021. At a moment he and his family were trapped in the environs of Werkamba, his home town, during the active war. Once again, the family had to flee, walking at night. It was only possible to light a three-rock cooking fire for the kids when there was complete quiet and no drone noise. Back in Mekelle, he was lucky to find his house nearly untouched.

Following their return, Hailemariam actively searched for internet connection throughout the blockade of Tigray in order to access literature and learn from other nations' experiences in managing environmental devastation caused by war. After the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, the literature study was completed with help from additional colleagues in Mekelle and abroad.

#### **Related article:**

- Mitiku Haile, Gebremichael, D., Gebrekidan, H., Gebregziabher, D., Darcha, G. and Gebreslassie, W., 2024. [Contributions of homestead agroforestry during the war in Tigray, Ethiopia](#). *Agroforestry at work*, 62, p.91.

#### **5. “The world’s capacity to ignore mass killing and suffering — particularly in Africa — is stark”**

Africa correspondent Colette Braeckman in her recent [editorial in the Belgian newspaper Le Soir](#): “On this 30th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, how can we not be heartbroken? We vowed that "never it should happen again" like our grandparents did in 1945. And since then, there has been eastern Congo, Ethiopia's Tigray province, and also Gaza... At the time, it seemed to us that the "killing machine" could have been stopped if it had been filmed and shown live.”

And [Gideon Rachman, in a recent op-ed for the Financial Times](#): “Go a little further back and the world’s capacity to ignore mass killing and suffering — particularly in Africa — is stark. The war between Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front that began in November 2020 cost around 600,000 lives, according to Olusegun Obasanjo, the former Nigerian president, who helped to negotiate a peace treaty. More than half the victims were civilians, many of whom died of starvation. The slogan “Black Lives Matter” that began in the US was resonating globally in 2020. But the wider world — including the African Union — barely seemed to register the loss of hundreds of thousands of black lives in the Ethiopia-Tigray war. What is it that causes some tragedies and conflicts to command the world’s attention and others to pass almost unnoticed?”

#### **6. Opinion pieces**

- Dawit K. Zigta: [Peace deal as a preparation time for a second phase war](#)
- Maebel Gebremedhin: [Looking Away From an Epidemic of Rape](#) (The New York Times)
- Lyla Mehta, Alan Nicol: [Water for peace? First, stop it becoming a weapon of war](#) (The New Humanitarian)
- Alex de Waal and Mulugeta Gebrehiwot: [Ethiopia Back on the Brink; How Abiy’s Reckless Ambition—and Emirati Meddling—Are Fueling Chaos in the Horn](#) (Foreign Affairs)

#### **7. Additional scientific articles related to the Tigray War**

- Tedla, M.G., Berhe, K.F. and Grmay, K.M., 2023. [The impact of armed conflict on animal well-being and welfare, and analyzing damage assessment on the veterinary sector: The case of Ethiopia's Tigray region](#). *Heliyon*, 9(12).

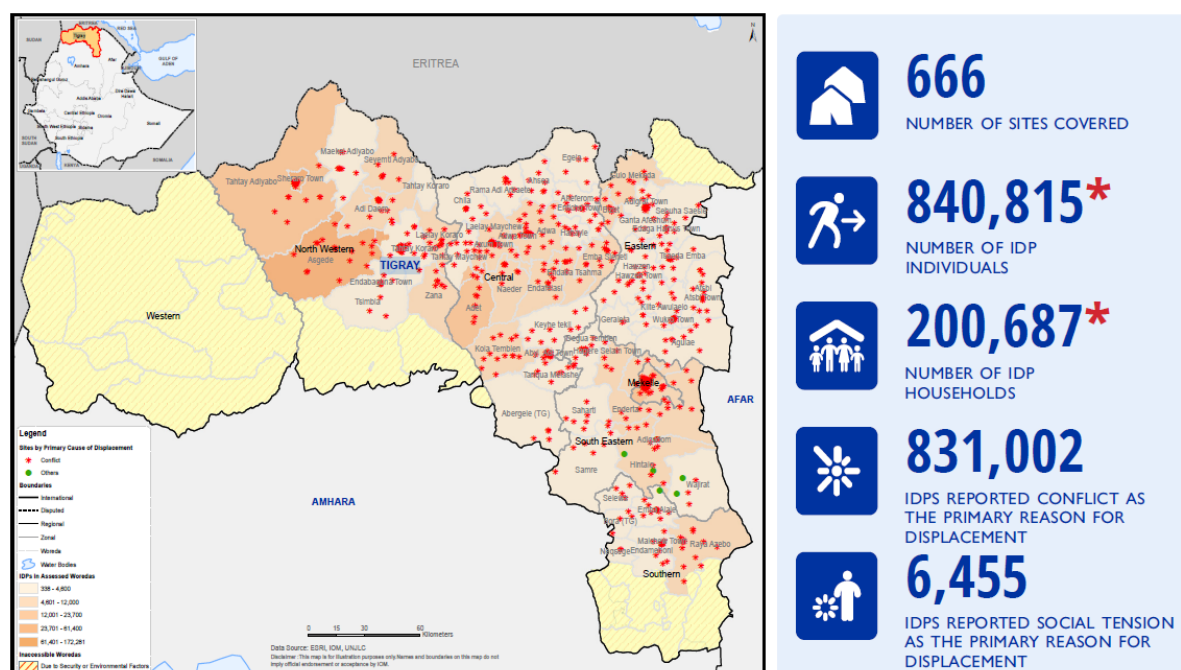
- Gufue, Z.H., Haftu, H.K., Alemayehu, Y., Tsegay, E.W., Mengesha, M.B. and Dessalegn, B., 2024. [Damage to the public health system caused by war-related looting or vandalism in the Tigray region of Northern Ethiopia](#). *Frontiers in Public Health*, 12, p.1271028.
- Tsadik, M., Legesse, A.Y., Teka, H., Abraha, H.E., Fisseha, G., Ebrahim, M.M., Berhe, B., Hadush, M.Y., Gebrekurstos, G., Ayele, B. and Tsegay, H., 2024. [Neonatal mortality during the war in Tigray: a cross-sectional community-based study](#). *The Lancet Global Health*, 12(5), pp.e868-e874.

## 8. Other media articles

- The Reporter Ethiopia, 6 April 2024: [Forgotten and forsaken: Tigray's women struggle for help](#)
- Addis Standard, 19 March 2024: [Tracing Tigray's path to peace: Uncertain future looms as Pretoria accord implementation drags on](#)
- Addis Standard, 6 April 2024. [AU monitoring team conducts second visit in predominantly Eritrea-controlled Gulemekeda district, Zalambessa town](#)
- Irob Anina Civil Society: [Eritrean regime forces Eritrean nationality on Irob indigenous people](#) (with video)
- Novaya Gazeta, 6 April 2024: [Anna Politkovskaya Award winner Lucy Kassa on the horrors of the war in Tigray and its legacy of injustice](#)
- The Reporter Ethiopia, 23 March 2024: [“People cannot even trust the ground they are walking on”: landmines terrorize Tigray](#)
- GOAL global, 26 March 2024: [Restoring Access to Healthcare in Conflict-Affected Communities in Tigray](#)
- NPO1, 4 april 2024: [De stille oorlog in Tigray](#) [in Dutch] (The silent war in Tigray)
- Daily Kos, 11 April 2024: [Elsewhere in Focus: Tigray, Ethiopia](#)
- BBC, 10 April 2024: [Bate Urgessa: Ethiopian opposition OLF figure shot dead and dumped by road](#)
- Africa Intelligence, 10 April 2024: [Swiss investor cleared of 'financing terrorism' during Tigray conflict](#). (All charges against Josua Gehrig, the Swiss owner of a farm in Ethiopia's Tigray region, have been dropped, two years after his arrest. He had attempted to transport a million birr in cash to pay his employees.)
- The Economist, 29 February 2024. [Africa's tiger economy is shot](#) - Abiy Ahmed has big dreams for Ethiopia. Reality is far harsher (includes reporting from Wukro)



**Digest 66. Despite the Pretoria agreement, Western Tigray remains occupied and 840,815 internally displaced persons cannot return home (22 May 2024)**



As large parts of Tigray remain occupied despite the Pretoria Agreement, most of Tigray's internally displaced persons (IDPs) have not yet returned home, as shown on this recent map by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Darker colours on the map stand for higher numbers of IDPs, and dots indicate IDP sites. The red asterisks (\*) stand for the fact that large parts of Tigray (in yellow on the map) could not be accessed. Source: International Organization for Migration, 16 May 2024. [National Displacement Report 18. IOM, Ethiopia](#). The report holds maps of all Ethiopian regions, as well as a countrywide map. [In this video, the IOM report is discussed](#) by Mulugeta Gebregziabher and Duke Burbridge.

In this digest we address again the slow implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of 2 November 2022. *Modern Diplomacy* brings a systematic state of the art (section 1). As could be feared after the discontinuation of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), possibilities for investigations about war crimes during the Tigray war are fading away (section 2). Further, and bypassing Tigray's Bureau of Land & Mines, the Ethiopian Government has issued mining licenses in Tigray to 37 mining companies (section 3). In certain academic publications, the term 'Northern Ethiopia' is used to shift attention away from war crimes in Tigray – the journal *Conflict & Health* alerted their readers about this (section 4). We further explore how Russian africanists see the Tigray War and Ethiopia (section 5). This 66th Tigray Digest winds off with a set of other media and opinion pieces on Tigray and Ethiopia (section 6).



## 1. Pretoria deal implementation

Modern Diplomacy has published an article by Batseba Seifu: “[The Fractured Reality After the Pretoria Peace Agreement](#)”. It gives a systematic state of the art in eight short sections:

- Foundations of Hope, Pillars of Disappointment
- Humanitarian Crisis: Denial and Deprivation
- Misuse and Exploitation of Aid: Profiteering at the Expense of the Vulnerable
- Constitutional Chaos: Amhara Occupation and Political Marginalization
- Violations of Human Rights: Silencing Dissent and Perpetuating Oppression
- Eritrean Occupation: A Foreign Stranglehold on Sovereignty
- International Inaction: A Failure to Uphold Justice
- Urgent Call to Action: Restoring Hope Amidst Despair

### Further reading:

- Avvenire, 20 April 2024. [In Tigray la minoranza cattolica Irob rischia di sparire](#). [in Italian] (In Tigray, the catholic Irob minority risks to disappear)
- The Catholic Herald, 22 April 2024. [Catholic Irob minority has lost its home in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#).
- The Reporter, 4 May 2024: [Fed, Tigray admin set two-month deadline for Pretoria deal implementation](#)
- Addis Standard, 15 May 2024: [Prosperity Party, TPLF convened for the third round of peace talks in Mekelle, Tigray](#)
- The Reporter, 20 April 2024: [Unsettled border disputes leave desperate people of Irob in no man's land](#)
- SER (Spanish public broadcaster), 17 May 2024: [Tigray se recupera de la guerra más mortífera del siglo XXI](#) [in Spanish] (Tigray Recovers from Deadliest War of the 21st Century)
- Youtube: US Congressman [Sherman Urges Action in Tigray and Sudan](#)
- The New Humanitarian, 23 April 2024: [Weighed down by war and drought, Tigray struggles to get back on its feet](#)
- Addis Standard, [17 May 2024, on “X”](#): a long message, stating in summary that the US Special Envoy and the Federal Government focus on the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program for ex-combatants, leaving aside the other urgent issues such as human rights violations and return of the IDPs
- The Reporter, 18 May 2024: [Engaging in constructive diplomacy](#)
- Addis Standard, 20 May 2024: [Despite federal gov't Inaction, Tigray region ready to receive IDPs in West Tigray, says General Tadesse Werede](#)

## 2. And the investigations about war crimes in Tigray – indefinitely postponed?

On 9 May, [Human Rights Watch published a detailed state of the art](#) concerning Ethiopia's Human Rights.

We read in 'The Reporter' that the “[Tigray Genocide Inquiry Commission Receives Federal Recognition](#)” (20 April). Yemane Zera, head of the Commission, told The Reporter the Tigray Interim

Administration has instructed his office to begin working with the Ministry of Finance and the World Bank and prepare their report for them, a report that will essentially try to quantify the economic damage of the Tigray War.

Yet, the Ethiopian Federal government has not given the slightest apology or acknowledgement about the massacres in Tigray. Many people have fears that the Ethiopian government's money is only to buy silence in this regard.

Indeed, The Reporter writes, "the Commission will be omitting human rights violations and other law and order matters from its report, according to Yemane. (...) The analysis work [of data on human rights violations] is expected to commence in the second phase, meaning after June 2024, pushing the quest for transitional justice further back than expected by stakeholders."

On his side, the Commission head [Yemane Zeray issued a formal response](#) to the Reporter article that the Commission is committed to all aspects of its mandate [including human rights abuses] and that it is the Tigray Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Office that engages with the World Bank and the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance on matters of reconstruction.

Nevertheless, [on 27 April, The Reporter announced](#) a decision by the Ethiopian Council of Ministers and the Office of the Prime Minister that crimes that were promised to be seen by transitional justice would now be seen in a normal court.

Further weaknesses of the policy have been raised:

- [Ethiopia's proposed Special Prosecutor: history repeating itself?](#) (ISS Today)
- [Despite concerns, Ethiopia advances Transitional Justice, imperiling path to genuine justice and reconciliation. A call for reflection and revision!](#) (Addis Standard, 17 May 2024)
- [U.S. Department of State: 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Ethiopia](#) (see section 5)

This is all very disappointing. The instant the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) was discontinued we all feared the possibilities for thorough investigation were fading away. A further option for victims of Ethiopian and Eritrean state violence in Tigray, and their relatives, is to consider filing a case at the Rome based "[Permanent Peoples' Tribunal](#)", who were for instance successful in getting the Rohingya genocide recognised.

#### **Further reading:**

- Africa Intelligence, 15 May 2024: [Abiy Ahmed ditches outside experts' advice on transitional justice](#). "In April, the Ethiopian government approved a transitional justice bill that is far removed from the recommendations of a specially commissioned group of experts whose report, submitted last year, has remained confidential. Africa Intelligence was able to consult it."
- Modern Diplomacy, 2 May 2024: [Civil Society Organizations Condemn UNOCHA's Handling of Tigray Crisis](#)

- Addis Standard, 16 May 2024: [Ex-Ethiopian peacekeepers of Tigrayan descent previously stationed in Abyei region face danger amid Sudan's escalating conflict](#)
- OTS, 3 May 2024: [In Äthiopiens Krisenregion Tigray verhungern Kinder](#) [in German] (Children are starving to death in Ethiopia's crisis region of Tigray)
- Samuel Getachew: [In Ethiopia, 'journalism compared to an act of terrorism'](#) (The Africa Report)
- The Guardian, 20 May 2024: [Ann Neumann: "As a war reporter, I trusted my fixer with my life. Two weeks later, he was kidnapped"](#)
- The Reporter, 27 April 2024: [More than 150 ethnic Tigrayan former ENDF Members held unjustly in prisons](#)

### 3. Ethiopian government issues mining licenses in Tigray

The Ethiopian Government has issued mining licenses in Tigray to 37 mining companies. Some of the companies received a license for areas larger than 100 km<sup>2</sup>.

See the press conference by Kalayu Gebrehiwet, head of Tigray's Bureau of Land & Mines, on May 1, 2024 [in Tigrinya]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0zpZBdNoVE> . The license issuing seems to be a hasty move by the central authorities – Mr. Kalayu states that some of the concessions are even overlapping!

However, [Tigray after the war is very different from Tigray before the war](#). Mining now involves unofficial Tigrayan actors who have an interest in both the illicit exploitation of gold, sapphires, copper, limestone, marble, and others, as reported by media outlets and Tigrayan acquaintances. They also involve in smuggling out gold and sapphire. Tigray is now facing illicit mining by individuals with access to excavators, dozers, and other equipment, in contrast to the earlier small groups of artisanal miners who were digging and panning. This type of mining brings up serious health, erosion, water pollution, and security problems in an area full of young, armed, and completely disillusioned individuals.

#### Related reading:

- [Map of Tigray's mineral resources, active and applied mining licences:.](#)
- Tigray Herald, 18 March 2024: [Urgent Plea to Halt Mining Exploration Licenses in Tigray](#)
- Leake Z on "X", 22 March 2024: [Illegal mining in Tigray - are we becoming the next Congo?](#)
- Dedebeit, 1 April 2024: [Mineral Exploration in Tigray and Its Associated Risks](#)
- Addis Standard, 17 April 2024: [Golden Ambitions: War legacy impedes Tigray's gold mining revival](#)

### 4. Editorial concerns related to a research paper on "Gender-based violence in the context of armed conflict in Northern Ethiopia"

The journal Conflict & Health recently published "Gender-based violence in the context of armed conflict in Northern Ethiopia" by Tewabe et al. (2024), a consortium including 9 employees of the Amhara regional government. The article narrates war rape by Tigray soldiers during their short

invasion of the eastern part of the Amhara region. Weaponised rape in Tigray itself is totally evacuated from the paper.

The journal received multiple complaints about this paper and has posted this message: **“Editor’s Note: Readers are alerted that concerns have been raised about the content of this article. Appropriate editorial action will be taken once these concerns have been investigated.”**

With some colleagues, we also thought that the paper is unscientific, and we have sent in a reply paper. Our main points are:

- Several of the facts presented in the article, which are typical incidents of rape in war, are unequivocal, and the perpetrators must face justice in court.
- The authors however manipulate the audience in claiming gender-based violence “in Northern Ethiopia”, deflecting the attention from the bulk of weaponized rape that occurred not in the Amhara region but in the Tigray region, earlier on.
- In a same move, they alter the border on their map between the Tigray and Amhara regions, bringing some ten districts from Tigray into the Amhara region. The scope of the conflict is also ignored. In contrast to the one to eight months of war in a quarter of Amhara region, there has been fighting in Tigray for two years - and the occupation of Western Tigray is still ongoing. We made all this very clear with the maps in our reply paper.
- The scholarship of the authors is poor because they keep bringing up generalistic terminology about "gender-based violence," which makes them equate the rapes committed by lone soldiers or groups of soldiers in the Amhara region with the weaponized rapes (approved by the highest authorities) committed by Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara soldiers in Tigray.

You may read the [paper that is under scrutiny here](#), and our submitted reply paper as a preprint: [How the term ‘Northern Ethiopia’ is used to shift attention away from Tigray and whitewash weaponized rape – a response to Tewabe et al. \(2024\)](#).

#### **Other scientific publications:**

- Liya Weldegebriel, Emnet Negash, Jan Nyssen, David B. Lobell, 2024. [“Eyes in the sky on Tigray - Monitoring the impact of armed conflict on cultivated highland using satellite imagery in Ethiopia”](#). Science of Remote Sensing --- Ghent University has also published a news item about this work: [War on cropland in Tigray causes famine — Ghent University \(ugent.be\)](#)
- Forthcoming book. Tom Gardner: [The Abiy Project - God, Power and War in the New Ethiopia](#). Hurst. A glimpse on the book has already been [availed by Martin Plaut](#).
- Nigusse Weldemariam Reda and Rafael Mitchell, 2024. [Conflict in Tigray: Teachers’ Experiences and the Implications for Post-Conflict Reconstruction](#). In: Tikly, L., Mitchell, R., Barrett, A.M., Batra, P., Pardo, A.B., Cameron, L., Coles, A., Juma, Z.R., Nunez, N.A., Paulson, J. and Reda, N.W., Teacher Professionalism in the Global South (pp. 76-88). Bristol University Press.

- Plaut, M., 2024. [Eritrea's foreign festivals: clashes within the exile community](#). Review of African Political Economy, p.20240009.

## 5. The Tigray war through Russian eyes

An interpretation of the Tigray War has been compiled as a scientific paper in Russian (with English abstract at the end) and published in the Journal of the Institute for African Studies. In "[Ethiopia: Difficult Way to Peace](#)", Roza Ismagilova (2023) narrates the Ethiopian government's viewpoint. The paper is largely compiled from newspaper articles.

A colleague who knows Roza says that she should have known better. Another professor who regularly gives seminars in Russia, including about the Tigray war, mentions that researchers of the young generation very widely share a different perspective. At various occasions, researchers and students stressed that they understood Tigray's plight, criticising some pro-Amhara-centralist romanticism of the older Russian elites. They conclude that there is a potential in Russia to strengthen perspectives different from the Ismagilova paper.

## 6. Other media and opinion pieces on Tigray and Ethiopia

- Modern Diplomacy, 13 May 2024: [Interview with Salsay Weyane Political Party Foreign Affairs Department Head, Hailu Kebede](#).
- Agenzia Nova, 15 May 2024: [Drone attacks in the Amhara region kill dozens of civilians](#)
- Addis Standard, 14 May 2024: [US Special Envoy Mike Hammer meets with Oromo opposition leaders, discusses political challenges](#)
- The Guardian, 9 May 2024: ['You need to be brave': Tigray's female cyclists ride again in the aftermath of war](#)
- Addis Standard, 24 April 2024: [Security Council vows to resolve 'extremist political views, organized crime and robbery emerging in some areas' in Ethiopia](#)
- Batseba Seifu: [The Lingering Threat of UXO and Land Mines: Congo and Tigray](#) (Modern Diplomacy)
- Government of Canada, 16 May 2024: [Minister Hussen announces \\$194-million funding to support education, sexual and reproductive rights, climate action, and peace and security in Ethiopia and Tanzania](#)

## Digest 67. A surge in books, reports and articles on the Tigray tragedy (26 June 2024)

Every endeavor must come to an end. I am extremely grateful for the ongoing assistance I have received from those who provided information and those who reviewed the Digests, both in terms of content refinement and language editing. Unfortunately, due to the significant time commitment required and the fact that it was all done without funding, this work has become increasingly difficult to manage alongside family needs. This is why I've made the difficult decision to conclude the Tigray Digest series. This last Tigray Digest addresses two reports recently published regarding Human Rights violations (by the New Lines Institute – section 1) and about the evaluation of the response by the UN Humanitarian Country Team in Ethiopia (section 2). Both reports are highly recommended reads, as they contain a wealth of information that has not been available earlier. We also highlight Tom Gardner's new book, *The Abiy Project: God, Power and War in the New Ethiopia* (section 3), and reflect on the "International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict" (section 4). Additionally, we focus attention on a special issue of "Politique Africaine" about the Horn (section 5), as well as a few other new scientific papers (section 6). Presentation of some opinion pieces (section 7), links to other media articles (section 8), and an outlook (section 9) make up the remaining sections of this last Tigray Digest.

1. New Lines Institute, June 2024: **Genocide in Tigray: Serious Breaches of International Law in the Tigray Conflict, Ethiopia, and Paths to Accountability**, 121 pages

From the introduction: "Despite the intense human suffering, this "forgotten" war has not garnered the international attention it desperately needs. There is an unfortunate sense in which the world is too ready to move on after its initial efforts. The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia [ICHREE] has been wound up before concluding its work."

The afterword strongly calls to account all international actors: "These findings, drawn from a critical mass of evidence, underscore our collective legal responsibility as signatory states to the Geneva Conventions and the Genocide Convention to prevent further atrocities in the region, and highlight the challenges that will be faced in seeking justice. The actions taken by Ethiopia to suppress the ICHREE reporting, and the lack of investigation required under the *CoH* [Cessation of Hostilities] agreement, means international investigation is now fully warranted. This report has taken the first step to ensure that the deadliest conflict of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not allowed to pass without its most pressing injustices being identified and accountability pursued. The international community now has the impetus and the evidence it needs to act."

[Weblink](#) [Full report](#)

### Related articles

- ABC News, 5 June 2024: ['Serious breaches' of international law committed in Tigray War, watchdog says](#)

- Aljazeera, 4 June 2024: [Strong evidence that Ethiopia committed genocide in Tigray war: Report](#)
- UMD Media, 9 June 2024: [Special panel on a new “Genocide in Tigray” report: paths to accountability and justice in Ethiopia](#)
- The Globe and Mail, 3 June 2024: [Ethiopia committed genocidal acts against Tigrayans during two-year war, study says](#)
- The National Interest, 3 June 2024: [The Tigray War May Be One of the Deadliest Conflict of This Century](#)

2. Humanitarian Exchange and Research Center, May 2024: **Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Crisis in Northern Ethiopia**, 123 pages.

Besides the immense opposition from the side of the Ethiopian Government, these three key findings (in the one-page brief) are strong and explanatory of the failed humanitarian response:

- The response **failed** to meet many essential needs and was **not underpinned** by humanitarian principles.
- The humanitarian leadership was ineffective, with a **disunited country team**.
- The **lack of collective strategies** for advocacy and access undermined the coherence of the response.

[Weblink](#) [Full report](#)

3. **“The Abiy Project: God, Power and War in the New Ethiopia”**

Tom Gardner’s new book, [The Abiy Project: God, Power and War in the New Ethiopia](#), received quasi unanimous positive reviews, except probably by Abiy and his cronies.

From the book’s back panel:

‘A riveting, detailed autopsy of Ethiopia’s heartbreaking journey to the brink of state collapse in a mere five years. Essential reading—even for a seasoned Ethiopia observer—to fully comprehend the myriad factors that have led to wanton bloodshed and human suffering under the watch of a Nobel Peace Prize-winning prime minister.’ — Zecharias Zelalem, award-winning journalist and Ethiopian press freedom advocate

‘An outstanding book, which will serve as a foundational text for anyone seeking to understand the complex developments in Ethiopia since the installation of its new prime minister.’ — Christopher Clapham, Professor Emeritus, Centre of African Studies, University of Cambridge

Recent discussions of the book are also well worth reading or listening to.



- University of Oxford, [African Studies Centre, 12 June](#), with Tom Gardner (The Economist), convener Jason Mosley (Oxford), and discussant Terje Østebø (Florida)
- Hudson Institute, 20 June: [Exploring Ethiopia's Tumultuous Transformation: A Discussion with Tom Gardner](#)
- Tom Gardner: [From Nobel peace prize to civil war: how Ethiopia's leader beguiled the world](#) (Long read in The Guardian)

#### 4. International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (???)

A week ago, 19 June was the UN International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. For sure there will have been some official ceremonies, but when it comes to the atrocious sexual violence that will haunt Tigray for generations it has consistently been downplayed by the UN system (see section 2). PM Abiy Ahmed indeed greenlighted a campaign of atrocious weaponised sexual abuses including (gang) rapes, sexual torture and enslavement against especially women and girls of Tigray.

Recently, the following has been published about sexual violence, with a focus on the Tigray war:

- London School of Economics: online seminar: [Can the law prevent violence against women in conflict?](#)
- Rita Kahsay et al.: Book «[In Plain Sight: Seeking justice for sexual violence in the Tigray War](#)» (2nd edition), with a wonderful cover by Gabrielle Tesfaye
- Ximena Borrazas and Edgar Gutierrez: [Tigray war: Ordeals of sexual violence survivors](#)
- Documentary film "[Speaking the Unspeakable: In the Aftermath of weaponised rape in Tigray, North-Ethiopia](#)" by Norwegian social anthropologist and filmmaker Thera Mjaaland and Tigrayan journalist Kibrom Mebrahtom ([Vimeo](#), no login required)
- Deutsche Welle, 19 June: [Will victims of Ethiopia's Tigray war get justice?](#) (24 minutes audio report)
- France24, 18 June: [Rape as a weapon: 120,000 women raped during Tigray war](#)

#### 5. A highly recommended special issue of "Politique Africaine" (in English)

The French scientific journal *Politique Africaine* published a [special issue on: "Conflits armés dans la Corne de l'Afrique" \(Armed Conflicts in the Horn of Africa\)](#). It features four articles on Ethiopia, two on Sudan, one on Southern Sudan and one on Somalia, most written in English. While the articles themselves are behind a paywall, the whole Special Issue is available for purchase at a cost of 15 euro.

Two articles on the Tigray war hold lots of exclusive documentation collected on site, a significant addition to the existing knowledge of that war.

**“A Personal Testimony from a Combatant in the Tigrayan Defense Forces”** by Serbi Netsanet. Abstract: This text tells the story of a young man’s experience as a combatant in the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) during the Ethio-Tigray war. It documents the fighting and describes the suffering and privation experienced by fighters and civilians alike from a subjective, rarely publicised point of view. It also sheds light on the Tigray internal political crisis and reveals its connection to the everyday course of the conflict.

**“The Ethnic Cleansing Policy in Western Tigray since November 2020 : Establishing the Facts and Understanding the Logic”** by Mehdi Labzaé. Abstract: Since November 2020, the zone officially known as Western Tigray has been annexed by the neighbouring Amhara region. Based on observations and interviews with displaced people, this article depicts the administration of the occupied zone. Ten episodes of massacres are listed in the text, showing how mass violence is an integral part of state practices under the Amhara nationalist administration. The text first elaborates on the relationship between social science and law and shows the uses of social science thinking and methodology in dealing with mass violence.

The ten massacres that are documented in the annex of this article were largely unknown to the outer world, due to stranglehold on information in Western Tigray. These massacres are now added to the database of known massacres and victims: [www.ethiopiaticraywar.com](http://www.ethiopiaticraywar.com).

## 6. Other scientific articles

- de Waal, A. (2024). [The History and Future of Famine](#). *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Food Studies*.
- Hagos Nigussie and Gebru Kahsay Kiflu (2024). [Framing the war on Tigray: The case of CNN and Al Jazeera](#). *Journalism*: 14648849241252017.
- Liya Yared (2024). [Conflict related sexual violence in Ethiopia: an applied approach to prevention](#). *Master's Thesis*. University of San Francisco.
- Hagos Nigussie and Gebru Kahsay Kiflu (2024). [Citizen journalism for social mobilization in war-affected Tigray](#). *Media, War & Conflict*.

## 7. Opinion pieces

- Ethiopian Press Freedom Defenders, 3 June 2024: [In Abiy's Ethiopia, 200 journalists have been arrested since 2019](#) (African Arguments)
- International Federation for Human Rights, 18 June 2024: [Ethiopia: Halt crackdown against human rights groups](#)
- Tghat, 2 June 2024: [What About Tigray? Jan Nyssen Reacts to Ghent University's plans to end collaborations with Israeli universities and research institutions](#)
- Davide Tommasin: [Università belga di Ghent tra Palestina, Israele & Tigray, Etiopia: i doppi standard](#)
- Batseba Seifu: [Tigray's Strategic Significance Unveiled: Navigating Complex Geopolitical Terrain in the Horn of Africa](#) (Modern Diplomacy)

## 8. Other media articles

- The Telegraph, 3 June 2024: [Desperate hunger in Tigray pushes thousands into the hands of kidnappers and people smugglers](#)
- AFP, 8 June 2024: [Ethiopia reports two Amhara officials killed as state of emergency ends](#)
- Addis Standard, 19 June 2024: [Mekelle immigration office reopens after three-year closure](#)
- The Reporter (Amharic edition), 19 June 2024: [በትግራይ ክልል ለ13 ወረዳዎች የተበላሸ የምግብ እህል መሠረ-ጨቱ ተረጋገጠ](#) (Thirteen districts of Tigray have received spoiled food aid)
- Addis Standard, 19 June 2024: [Four dead, eight hospitalized after eating anthrax-infected beef in Tigray's Hintalo district](#)
- Addis Standard, 22 June 2024: [IDPs in Tigray rally for repatriation, urging proper implementation of the Pretoria agreement](#)
- France24, 21 June 2024: [‘Beg to survive’: The Tigray war refugees still languishing in camps](#) (television report)
- Africa Confidential, 31 May 2024: [Abiy keeps Addis on side but alienates the nation](#)
- Developing Telecoms, 12 June 2024: [Safaricom Ethiopia launches operations in Tigray](#)
- BBC Tigrinya, 18 June 2024: [መዓልታት ‘ዝተጨወየት’ ማህሌት እንታይ ይበሉ? \(16 Years Old Student Mahlet Teklay Found Dead after Abduction in Adwa\)](#) – this reminds me of a recent telephone call with a young woman, one of my previous students at Mekelle University: “in contrast to the good times that you know, nowadays we are afraid of moving out of the house, not only in the night but even during daytime”.

## 9. Outlook

We are now busy compiling the 67 digests into a single volume titled: “**A Chronicle of the Tigray Tragedy (2020 – 2024)**”, for wider distribution. I will keep you updated on its availability. The mailing list will also remain active to provide you with major developments regarding the humanitarian situation in Tigray.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the 2200+ regular subscribers. During these difficult months from late 2020 forward, the loyalty rate—if we may use that term—was above 95%.

## Conclusion: There is no happy ending...

No further issues of the Tigray Digest will be published, while the plight of Tigray is ongoing. The effort has been constant for almost four years, but, as mentioned in the last Digest, due to the significant time commitment required and the fact that it was all done without funding, this work has become increasingly difficult to manage alongside family needs. This is why I've made the difficult decision to conclude the Tigray Digest series. Links provided throughout the bundled Chronicle would allow the interested reader to select a couple of formal or social media outlets that provide regular updates.

While, in general, chronicles are not really intended to reach conclusions, it may be good to summarize the lasting impressions of the current situation, informed by travellers who have recently visited Tigray.

Despite the end of the war, the majority of Tigrayans still confront many challenges. In general, people's methods for coping, grieving, and moving on vary based on their outlook on life.

Since there are seldom any government services available, farmers manage their land independently by working it and innovating. Real incomes have decreased significantly in the cities, and there is a serious unemployment issue.

The loss of friends and relatives is causing great sorrow. Although there is a fear of getting sucked into new wars, issues of basic survival are most pressing as there continues to be no recovery efforts at scale, and mostly symbolic government presence only.

People who have been internally displaced are jammed into the towns. The majority of public services are ineffectual. Urbanites and young farmers often cherish hope of relocating locally or overseas, as people generally are concerned about Tigray's ability to "exist" in the modern Ethiopia rather than merely survive.

Everyone is talking about their issues, which makes the atmosphere gloomy. It appears that the UN and NGOs lack the resources necessary to handle the situation's severity.

We started this chronicle with a reproduction of the Scientists' Appeal, which we issued as soon as the Tigray war broke out ([In absence of major international diplomacy and rescue, towards a repeat of the great famine of 1984-1985](#)). Looking back, our appeal was regrettably premonitory given the complete catastrophe Ethiopia has entered since then and the tremendous tragedy of Tigray, which is an order of magnitude worse even than what occurs elsewhere in the country.

## Author's publication list in relation to the war on Tigray and its consequences

### International peer-reviewed journals (part of ISI Web of Science)

Hailemariam Meaza, Tesfaalem Ghebreyohannes, **Nyssen, J.**, Zbelo Tesfamariam, Biadgilgn Demissie, Poesen, J., Misgina Gebrehiwot, Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel, Deckers, S., Desta Gebremichael Gidey, Vanmaercke, M., 2024. Managing the environmental impacts of war: What can be learned from conflict-vulnerable communities? *Science of the Total Environment*: 927: 171974. **(IF 9.8)**

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### **Interviews and other significant contributions to media outlets**

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**Note:** the many dozens of press articles that only refer to our documentation work (without us being personally contacted) or otherwise with only a short citation are not included in this list.